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BEYOND THE HORIZON

BOOKS BY

EUGENE O'NEILL

Beyond the Horizon

Moon of the Caribbees and Six Other Plays of the Sea

The Emperor Jones; Diff'rent; The Straw

The Hairy Ape; Anna Christie; The First Man

BEYOND THE HORIZON

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

BY

EUGENE G. O'NEILL

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ACT I

SCENE I: The Road. Sunset of a day in Spring.

SCENE II: The Farm House. The same night.

ACT II

(*Three years later*)

SCENE I: The Farm House. Noon of a Summer day.

SCENE II: The top of a hill on the farm overlooking the sea. The following day.

ACT III

(*Five years later*)

SCENE I: The Farm House. Dawn of a day in late Fall.

SCENE II: The Road. Sunrise.

ACT I

CHARACTERS

JAMES MAYO, *a farmer*

KATE MAYO, *his wife*

CAPTAIN DICK SCOTT, *of the bark "Sunda," her brother*

ANDREW MAYO
ROBERT MAYO } *sons of James Mayo*

RUTH ATKINS,

MRS. ATKINS, *her widowed mother*

MARY,

BEN, *a farm hand*

DOCTOR FAWCETT.

(*The "right" and "left" of the stage directions are t*
audience's.)

ACT ONE

SCENE ONE

SCENE—*A section of country highway. The road runs diagonally from the left, forward, to the right, rear, and can be seen in the distance winding toward the horizon like a pale ribbon between the low, rolling hills with their freshly plowed fields clearly divided from each other, checkerboard fashion, by the lines of stone walls and rough snake fences.*

The forward triangle cut off by the road is a section of a field from the dark earth of which myriad bright-green blades of fall-sown rye are sprouting. A straggling line of piled rocks, too low to be called a wall, separates this field from the road.

To the rear of the road is a ditch with a sloping, grassy bank on the far side. From the center of this an old, gnarled apple tree, just budding into leaf, strains its twisted branches heavenwards, black against the pallor of distance. A snake-fence sidles from left to right

along the top of the bank, passing beneath the apple tree.

The hushed twilight of a day in May is just beginning. The horizon hills are still rimmed by a faint line of flame, and the sky above them glows with the crimson flush of the sunset. This fades gradually as the action of the scene progresses.

At the rise of the curtain, ROBERT MAYO *is discovered sitting on the fence. He is a tall, slender young man of twenty-three. There is a touch of the poet about him expressed in his high forehead and wide, dark eyes. His features are delicate and refined, leaning to weakness in the mouth and chin. He is dressed in grey corduroy trousers pushed into high laced boots, and a blue flannel shirt with a bright colored tie. He is reading a book by the fading sunset light. He shuts this, keeping a finger in to mark the place, and turns his head toward the horizon, gazing out over the fields and hills. His lips move as if he were reciting something to himself.*

His brother ANDREW *comes along the road from the right, returning from his work in the fields. He is twenty-seven years old, an opposite type to* ROBERT*—husky, sun-bronzed, handsome in a large-featured, manly fashion—a son of the soil, intelligent in a shrewd way, but with nothing of the intellectual about him. He wears overalls, leather boots, a grey flannel shirt open at*

the neck, and a soft, mud-stained hat pushed back on his head. He stops to talk to ROBERT, *leaning on the hoe he carries.*

ANDREW—[*Seeing* ROBERT *has not noticed his presence—in a loud shout.*] Hey there! [ROBERT *turns with a start. Seeing who it is, he smiles.*] Gosh, you do take the prize for day-dreaming! And I see you've toted one of the old books along with you. Want to bust your eyesight reading in this light?

ROBERT—[*Glancing at the book in his hand with a rather shamefaced air.*] I wasn't reading—just then, Andy.

ANDREW—No, but you have been. Shucks, you never will get any sense, Rob. [*He crosses the ditch and sits on the fence near his brother.*] What is it this time—poetry, I'll bet. [*He reaches for the book.*] Let me see.

ROBERT—[*Handing it to him rather reluctantly.*] Yes, it's poetry. Look out you don't get it full of dirt.

ANDREW—[*Glancing at his hands.*] That isn't dirt—it's good clean earth; but I'll be careful of the old thing. I just wanted to take a peep at it. [*He turns over the pages.*]

ROBERT—[*Slyly.*] Better look out for your eyesight, Andy.

ANDREW—Huh! If reading this stuff was the only way to get blind, I'd see forever. [*His eyes read*

something and he gives an exclamation of disgust.] Hump! [*With a provoking grin at his brother he reads aloud in a doleful, sing-song voice.*] "I have loved wind and light and the bright sea. But holy and most sacred night, not as I love and have loved thee." [*He hands the book back.*] Here! Take it and bury it. Give me a good magazine any time.

ROBERT—[*With a trace of irritation.*] The Farm Journal?

ANDREW—Sure; anything sensible. I suppose it's that year in college gave you a liking for that kind of stuff. I'm darn glad I stopped with High School, or maybe I'd been crazy too. [*He grins and slaps* ROBERT *on the back affectionately.*] Imagine me reading poetry and plowing at the same time. The team'd run away, I'll bet.

ROBERT—[*Laughing.*] Or picture me plowing. That'd be worse.

ANDREW—[*Seriously.*] Pa was right never to sick you onto the farm. You surely were never cut out for a farmer, that's a fact,—even if you'd never been took sick. [*With concern.*] Say, how'd you feel now, anyway? I've lost track of you. Seems as if I never did get a chance to have a talk alone with you these days, 'count of the work. But you're looking fine as silk.

ROBERT—Why, I feel great—never better.

ANDREW—That's bully. You've surely earned it. You certainly had enough sickness in the old days to last you the rest of your life.

ROBERT—A healthy animal like you, you brute, can hardly understand what I went through—although you saw it. You remember—sick one day, and well the next—always weak—never able to last through a whole term at school 'til I was years behind everyone my age—not able to get in any games—it was hell! These last few years of comparative health have been heaven to me.

ANDREW—I know; they must have been. [*After a pause.*] You should have gone back to college last fall, like I know you wanted to. You're fitted for that sort of thing—just as I ain't.

ROBERT—You know why I didn't go back, Andy. Pa didn't like the idea, even if he didn't say so; and I know he wanted the money to use improving the farm. And besides, I had pretty much all I cared for in that one year. I'm not keen on being a student, just because you see me reading books all the time. What I want to do now is keep on moving so that I won't take root in any one place.

ANDREW—Well, the trip you're leaving on tomorrow will keep you moving all right. [*At this mention of the trip they both fall silent. There is a pause. Finally* ANDREW *goes on, awkwardly attempting to speak casually.*] Uncle says you'll be gone three years.

ROBERT—About that, he figures.

ANDREW—[*Moodily.*] That's a long time.

ROBERT—Not so long when you come to consider it. You know the *Sunda* sails around the Horn for

Yokohama first, and that's a long voyage on a sailing ship; and if we go to any of the other places Uncle Dick mentions—India, or Australia, or South Africa, or South America—they'll be long voyages, too.

ANDREW—You can have all those foreign parts for all of me. A trip to the port once in a while, or maybe down to New York a couple of times a year—that's all the travel I'm hankering after. [*He looks down the road to the right.*] Here comes Pa. [*The noise of a team of horses coming slowly down the road is heard, and a man's voice urging them on. A moment later* JAMES MAYO *enters, driving the two weary horses which have been unhitched from the plow. He is his son* ANDREW *over again in body and face—an* ANDREW *sixty-five years old, with a short, square, white beard. He is dressed much the same as* ANDREW.]

MAYO—[*Checking his horses when he sees his sons.*] Whoa there! Hello boys! What are you two doin' there roostin' on the fence like a pair of hens?

ROBERT—[*Laughing.*] Oh, just talking things over, Pa.

ANDREW—[*With a sly wink.*] Rob's trying to get me into reading poetry. He thinks my education's been neglected.

MAYO—[*Chuckling.*] That's good! You kin go out and sing it to the stock at nights to put 'em to sleep. What's that he's got there—'nother book? Good Lord, I thought you'd read every book there was

in the world, Robert; and here you go and finds 'nother one!

ROBERT—[*With a smile.*] There's still a few left, Pa.

ANDREW—He's learning a new poem about the "bright sea" so he'll be all prepared to recite when he gets on the boat tomorrow.

MAYO—[*A bit rebukingly.*] He'll have plenty of time to be thinkin' 'bout the water in the next years. No need to bother 'bout it yet.

ROBERT—[*Gently.*] I wasn't. That's just Andy's fooling.

MAYO—[*Changing the subject abruptly; turns to* ANDREW.] How are things lookin' up to the hill lot, Andy?

ANDREW—[*Enthusiastically.*] Fine as silk for this early in the year. Those oats seem to be coming along great.

MAYO—I'm most done plowin' up the old medder—figger I ought to have it all up by tomorrow noon; then you kin start in with the harrowin'.

ANDREW—Sure. I expect I'll be through up above by then. There ain't but a little left to do.

MAYO—[*To the restive team.*] Whoa there! You'll get your supper soon enough, you hungry critters. [*Turning again to* ANDREW.] It looks like a good year for us, son, with fair luck on the weather—even if it's hard tucker gettin' things started.

ANDREW—[*With a grin of satisfaction.*] I can

stand my share of the hard work, I guess—and then some.

MAYO—That's the way to talk, son. Work never done a man harm yet—leastways, not work done out in the open. [ROBERT *has been trying to pretend an interest in their conversation, but he can't help showing that it bores him.* ANDREW *notices this.*]

ANDREW—But farming ain't poetry, is it, Rob? [ROBERT *smiles but remains silent.*]

MAYO—[*Seriously.*] There's more satisfaction in the earth than ever was in any book; and Robert'll find it out sooner or later. [*A twinkle comes into his eyes.*] When he's grown up and got some sense.

ROBERT—[*Whimsically.*] I'm never going to grow up—if I can help it.

MAYO—Time'll tell. Well, I'll be movin' along home. Don't you two stay gossipin' too long. [*He winks at* ROBERT.] 'Specially you, Andy. Ruth and her Maw is comin' to supper, and you'd best be hurryin' to wash up and put on your best Sunday-go-to-meetin' clothes. [*He laughs.* ROBERT'S *face contracts as if he were wincing at some pain, but he forces a smile.* ANDREW *grows confused and casts a quick side glance at his brother.*]

ANDREW—I'll be along in a minute, Pa.

MAYO—And you, Robert, don't you stay moonin' at the sky longer'n is needful. You'll get lots o' time for that the next three years you're out on the sea. Remember this is your last night to home, and you've got to make an early start tomorrow, [*He hesitates,*

then finishes earnestly] 'n' your Ma'll be wantin' to see all she kin o' you the little time left.

ROBERT—I'm not forgetting, Pa. I'll be home right away.

MAYO—That's right. I'll tell your Maw you're acomin'. [*He chucks to the horses.*] Giddap, old bones! Don't you want no supper tonight? [*The horses walk off, and he follows them. There is a pause.* ANDREW *and* ROBERT *sit silently, without looking at each other.*]

ANDREW—[*After a while.*] Ma's going to miss you a lot, Rob.

ROBERT—Yes—and I'll miss her.

ANDREW—And Pa ain't feeling none too happy to have you go—though he's been trying not to show it.

ROBERT—I can see how he feels.

ANDREW—And you can bet that I'm not giving any cheers about it. [*He puts one hand on the fence near* ROBERT.]

ROBERT—[*Putting one hand on top of* ANDREW'S *with a gesture almost of shyness.*] I know that too, Andy.

ANDREW—I'll miss you as much as anybody, I guess. I know how lonesome the old place was winter before last when you was away to college—and even then you used to come home once in a while; but this time—— [*He stops suddenly.*]

ROBERT—Let's not think about it—'til afterward. We'll only spoil this last night if we do.

ANDREW—That's good advice. [*But after a pause he returns to the subject again.*] You see, you and I ain't like most brothers—always fighting and separated a lot of the time, while we've always been together—just the two of us. It's different with us. That's why it hits so hard, I guess.

ROBERT—[*With feeling.*] It's just as hard for me, Andy—believe that! I hate to leave you and the old folks—but—I feel I've got to. There's something calling me—— [*He points to the horizon*] calling to me from over there, beyond—— and I feel as if—— no matter what happens—— Oh, I can't just explain it to you, Andy.

ANDREW—No need to, Rob. [*Angry at himself.*] You needn't try to explain. It's all just as it ought to be. Hell! You want to go. You feel you ought to, and you *got* to!—— that's all there is to it; and I wouldn't have you miss this chance for the world.

ROBERT—It's fine of you to feel that way, Andy.

ANDREW—Huh! I'd be a nice son-of-a-gun if I didn't, wouldn't I? When I know how you need this sea trip to make a new man of you—in the body, I mean—and give you your full health back.

ROBERT—[*A trifle impatiently.*] All of you seem to keep harping on my health. You were so used to seeing me lying around the house in the old days that you never will get over the notion that I'm a chronic invalid, and have to be looked after like a baby all the time, or wheeled round in a chair like Mrs. Atkins. You don't realize how I've bucked up in the past few

years. Why, I bet right now I'm just as healthy as you are—I mean just as sound in wind and limb; and if I was staying on at the farm, I'd prove it to you. You're suffering from a fixed idea about my delicateness—and so are Pa and Ma. Every time I've offered to help, Pa has stared at me as if he thought I was contemplating suicide.

ANDREW—[*Conciliatingly.*] Nobody claimed the undertaker was taking your measurements. All I was saying was the sea trip would be bound to do anybody good.

ROBERT—If I had no other excuse for going on Uncle Dick's ship but just my health, I'd stay right here and start in plowing.

ANDREW—Can't be done. No use in your talking that way, Rob. Farming ain't your nature. There's all the difference shown in just the way us two feel about the farm. I like it, all of it, and you—well, you like the home part of it, I expect; but as a place to work and grow things, you hate it. Ain't that right?

ROBERT—Yes, I suppose it is. I've tried to take an interest but—well, you're the Mayo branch of the family, and I take after Ma and Uncle Dick. It's natural enough when you come to think of it. The Mayos have been farmers from way back, while the Scotts have been mostly sea-faring folks, with a school teacher thrown in now and then on the woman's side—just as Ma was before her marriage.

ANDREW—You do favor Ma. I remember she used

always to have her nose in a book when I was a kid; but she seems to have given it up of late years.

ROBERT—[*With a trace of bitterness.*] The farm has claimed her in spite of herself. That's what I'm afraid it might do to me in time; and that's why I feel I ought to get away. [*Fearing he has hurt* ANDREW's *feelings.*] You musn't misunderstand me, Andy. For you it's a different thing. You're a Mayo through and through. You're wedded to the soil. You're as much a product of it as an ear of corn is, or a tree. Father is the same. This farm is his life-work, and he's happy in knowing that another Mayo, inspired by the same love, will take up the work where he leaves off. I can understand your attitude, and Pa's; and I think it's wonderful and sincere. But I—well, I'm not made that way.

ANDREW—No, you ain't; but when it comes to understanding, I guess I realize that you've got your own angle of looking at things.

ROBERT—[*Musingly.*] I wonder if you do, really.

ANDREW—[*Confidently.*] Sure I do. You've seen a bit of the world, enough to make the farm seem small, and you've got the itch to see it all.

ROBERT—It's more than that, Andy.

ANDREW—Oh, of course. I know you're going to learn navigation, and all about a ship, so's you can be an officer. That's natural, too. There's fair pay in it, I expect, when you consider that you've always got a home and grub thrown in; and if you're set on

travelling, you can go anywhere you're a mind to, without paying fare.

ROBERT—[*With a smile that is half-sad.*] It's more than that, Andy.

ANDREW—Sure it is. There's always a chance of a good thing coming your way in some of those foreign ports or other. I've heard there are great opportunities for a young fellow with his eyes open in some of those new countries that are just being opened up. And with your education you ought to pick up the language quick. [*Jovially.*] I'll bet that's what you've been turning over in your mind under all your quietness! [*He slaps his brother on the back with a laugh.*] Well, if you get to be a millionaire all of a sudden, call 'round once in a while and I'll pass the plate to you. We could use a lot of money right here on the farm without hurting it any.

ROBERT—[*Forced to laugh.*] I've never considered that practical side of it for a minute, Andy. [*As* ANDREW *looks incredulous.*] That's the truth.

ANDREW—Well, you ought to.

ROBERT—No, I oughtn't. You're trying to wish an eye-for-business on me I don't possess. [*Pointing to the horizon—dreamily.*] Supposing I was to tell you that it's just Beauty that's calling me, the beauty of the far off and unknown, the mystery and spell of the East, which lures me in the books I've read, the need of the freedom of great wide spaces, the joy of wandering on and on—in quest of the secret which is hidden just over there, beyond the horizon? Sup-

pose I told you that was the one and only reason for my going?

ANDREW—I should say you were nutty.

ROBERT—Then I must be—because it's so.

ANDREW—I don't believe it. You've got that idea out of your poetry books. A good dose of sea-sickness will get that out of your system.

ROBERT—[*Frowning.*] Don't, Andy. I'm serious.

ANDREW—Then you might as well stay right here, because we've got all you're looking for right on this farm. There's wide space enough, Lord knows; and you can have all the sea you want by walking a mile down to the beach; and there's plenty of horizon to look at, and beauty enough for anyone, except in the winter. [*He grins.*] As for the mystery and spell, and other things you mentioned, I haven't met 'em yet, but they're probably lying around somewheres. I'll have you understand this is a first class farm with all the fixings. [*He laughs.*]

ROBERT—[*Joining in the laughter in spite of himself.*] It's no use talking to you, you chump!

ANDREW—Maybe; but you'll see I'm right before you've gone far. You're not as big a nut as you'd like to make out. You'd better not say anything to Uncle Dick about spells and things when you're on the ship. He'll likely chuck you overboard for a Jonah. [*He jumps down from fence.*] I'd better run along. I've got to wash up some as long as Ruth's Ma is coming over for supper.

ROBERT—[*Pointedly—almost bitterly.*] And Ruth.

ANDREW—[*Confused—looking everywhere except at* ROBERT—*trying to appear unconcerned.*] Yes, Pa did say she was staying too. Well, I better hustle, I guess, and—— [*He steps over the ditch to the road while he is talking.*]

ROBERT—[*Who appears to be fighting some strong inward emotion—impulsively.*] Wait a minute, Andy! [*He jumps down from the fence.*] There is something I want to—— [*He stops abruptly, biting his lips, his face coloring.*]

ANDREW—[*Facing him; half-defiantly.*] Yes?

ROBERT—[*Confusedly.*] No—— never mind—— it doesn't matter, it was nothing.

ANDREW—[*After a pause, during which he stares fixedly at* ROBERT'S *averted face.*] Maybe I can guess—— what you were going to say—— but I guess you're right not to talk about it. [*He pulls* ROBERT'S *hand from his side and grips it tensely; the two brothers stand looking into each other's eyes for a minute.*] We can't help those things, Rob. [*He turns away, suddenly releasing* ROBERT'S *hand.*] You'll be coming along shortly, won't you?

ROBERT—[*Dully.*] Yes.

ANDREW—See you later, then. [*He walks off down the road to the left.* ROBERT *stares after him for a moment; then climbs to the fence rail again, and looks out over the hills, an expression of deep grief on his face. After a moment or so,* RUTH *enters hurriedly from the left. She is a healthy, blonde, out-of-door girl of twenty, with a graceful, slender figure. Her*

face, though inclined to roundness, is undeniably pretty, its large eyes of a deep blue set off strikingly by the sun-bronzed complexion. Her small, regular features are marked by a certain strength — an underlying, stubborn fixity of purpose hidden in the frankly-appealing charm of her fresh youthfulness. She wears a simple white dress but no hat.]

RUTH—[*Seeing him.*] Hello, Rob!

ROBERT—[*Startled.*] Hello, Ruth!

RUTH—[*Jumps the ditch and perches on the fence beside him.*] I was looking for you.

ROBERT—[*Pointedly.*] Andy just left here.

RUTH—I know. I met him on the road a second ago. He told me you were here. [*Tenderly playful.*] I wasn't looking for Andy, Smarty, if that's what you mean. I was looking for *you*.

ROBERT—Because I'm going away tomorrow?

RUTH—Because your mother was anxious to have you come home and asked me to look for you. I just wheeled Ma over to your house.

ROBERT—[*Perfunctorily.*] How is your mother?

RUTH—[*A shadow coming over her face.*] She's about the same. She never seems to get any better or any worse. Oh, Rob, I do wish she'd pick up a little or—— or try to make the best of things that can't be helped.

ROBERT—Has she been nagging at you again?

RUTH—[*Nods her head, and then breaks forth rebelliously.*] She never stops nagging. No matter what I do for her she finds fault. She's growing more

irritable every day. Oh, Rob, you've no idea how hard it is living there alone with her in that big lonely house. It's enough to drive anyone mad. If only Pa was still living—— [*She stops as if ashamed of her outburst.*] I suppose I shouldn't complain this way. I wouldn't to any one but you. [*She sighs.*] Poor Ma, Lord knows it's hard enough for her — having to be wheeled around in a chair ever since I was born. I suppose it's natural to be cross when you're not able ever to walk a step. But why should she be in a temper with me all the time? Oh, I'd like to be going away some place—like you!

ROBERT—It's hard to stay—and equally hard to go, sometimes.

RUTH—There! If I'm not the stupid body! I swore I wasn't going to speak about your trip—until after you'd gone; and there I go, first thing!

ROBERT—Why didn't you want to speak of it?

RUTH—Because I didn't want to spoil this last night you're here. Oh, Rob, I'm going to—we're all going to miss you so awfully. Your mother is going around looking as if she'd burst out crying any minute. You ought to know how I feel. Andy and you and I—why it seems as if we'd always been together.

ROBERT—[*With a wry attempt at a smile.*] You and Andy will still have each other. It'll be harder for me without anyone.

RUTH—But you'll have new sights and new people to take your mind off; while we'll be here with the

old, familiar place to remind us every minute of the day. It's a shame you're going—just at this time, in spring, when everything is getting so nice. [*With a sigh.*] I oughtn't to talk that way when I know going's the best thing for you—on account of your health. The sea trip's bound to do you so much good, everyone says.

ROBERT—[*With a half-resentful grimace.*] Don't tell me *you* think I'm a hopeless invalid, too! I've heard enough of that talk from the folks. Honestly, Ruth, I feel better than I ever did in my life. I'm disgustingly healthy. I wouldn't even consider my health an excuse for this trip.

RUTH—[*Vaguely.*] Of course you're bound to find all sorts of opportunities to get on, your father says.

ROBERT—[*Heatedly.*] I don't give a damn about that! I wouldn't take a voyage across the road for the best opportunity in the world of the kind Pa thinks of. I'd run away from it instead. [*He smiles at his own irritation.*] Excuse me, Ruth, for getting worked up over it; but Andy gave me an overdose of the practical considerations.

RUTH—[*Slowly puzzled.*] Well, then, if it isn't any of those reasons—— [*With sudden intensity.*] Oh, Rob, why *do* you want to go?

ROBERT—[*Turning to her quickly, in surprise—slowly.*] Why do you ask that, Ruth?

RUTH—[*Dropping her eyes before his searching glance.*] Because—— [*Lamely.*] It seems such a shame,

ROBERT—[*Insistently.*] Why?

RUTH—Oh, because—everything.

ROBERT—I could hardly back out now, even if I wanted to. And I'll be forgotten before you know it.

RUTH—[*Indignantly.*] You won't! I'll never forget—— [*She stops and turns away to hide her confusion.*]

ROBERT—[*Softly.*] Will you promise me that?

RUTH—[*Evasively.*] Of course. It's mean of you to think that any of us would forget so easily.

ROBERT—[*Disappointedly.*] Oh!

RUTH—[*With an attempt at lightness.*] But you haven't told me your reason for leaving yet? Aren't you going to?

ROBERT—[*Moodily.*] I doubt if you'll understand. It's difficult to explain, even to myself. It's more an instinctive longing that won't stand dissection. Either you feel it, or you don't. The cause of it all is in the blood and the bone, I guess, not in the brain, although imagination plays a large part in it. I can remember being conscious of it first when I was only a kid—you haven't forgotten what a sickly specimen I was then, in those days, have you?

RUTH—[*With a shudder.*] They're past. Let's not think about them.

ROBERT—You'll have to, to understand. Well, in those days, when Ma was fixing meals, she used to get me out of the way by pushing my chair to the west window and telling me to look out and be quiet. That wasn't hard. I guess I was always quiet.

RUTH—[*Compassionately.*] Yes, you always were —and you suffering so much, too!

ROBERT—[*Musingly.*] So I used to stare out over the fields to the hills, out there—[*He points to the horizon*] and somehow after a time I'd forget any pain I was in, and start dreaming. I knew the sea was over beyond those hills,—the folks had told me—and I used to wonder what the sea was like, and try to form a picture of it in my mind. [*With a smile.*] There was all the mystery in the world to me then about that—far-off sea—and there still is! It called to me then just as it does now. [*After a slight pause.*] And other times my eyes would follow this road, winding off into the distance, toward the hills, as if it, too, was searching for the sea. And I'd promise myself that when I grew up and was strong, I'd follow that road, and it and I would find the sea together. [*With a smile.*] You see, my making this trip is only keeping that promise of long ago.

RUTH—[*Charmed by his low, musical voice telling the dreams of his childhood.*] Yes, I see.

ROBERT—Those were the only happy moments of my life then, dreaming there at the window. I liked to be all alone—those times. I got to know all the different kinds of sunsets by heart—the clear ones and the cloudy ones, and all the color schemes of their countless variations—although I could hardly name more than three or four colors correctly. And all those sunsets took place over there—[*He points*] beyond the horizon. So gradually I came to believe

that all the wonders of the world happened on the other side of those hills. There was the home of the good fairies who performed beautiful miracles. [*He smiles.*] I believed in fairies then, although I suppose I ought to have been ashamed of it from a boy's standpoint. But you know how contemptuous of all religion Pa's always been—even the mention of it in the house makes him angry.

RUTH—Yes. [*Wearily.*] It's just the opposite to our house.

ROBERT—He'd bullied Ma into being ashamed of believing in anything and he'd forbidden her to teach Andy or me. There wasn't much about our home but the life on the farm. I didn't like that, so I *had* to believe in fairies. [*With a smile.*] Perhaps I still do believe in them. Anyway, in those days they were real enough, and sometimes—I suppose the mental science folks would explain it by self-hypnosis—I could actually hear them calling to me in soft whispers to come out and play with them, dance with them down the road in the dusk in a game of hide-and-seek to find out where the sun was hiding himself. They sang their little songs to me, songs that told of all the wonderful things they had in their home on the other side of the hills; and they promised to show me all of them, if I'd only come, come! But I couldn't come then, and I used to cry sometimes and Ma would think I was in pain. [*He breaks off suddenly with a laugh.*] That's why I'm going now, I suppose. For I can still hear them calling, although I'm a man and

have seen the other side of many hills. But the horizon is as far away and as luring as ever. [*He turns to her—softly.*] Do you understand now, Ruth?

RUTH—[*Spellbound, in a whisper.*] Yes.

ROBERT—You feel it then?

RUTH—Yes, yes, I do! [*Unconsciously she snuggles close against his side. His arm steals about her as if he were not aware of the action.*] Oh, Rob, how could I help feeling it? You tell things so beautifully!

ROBERT—[*Suddenly realizing that his arm is around her, and that her head is resting on his shoulder, gently takes his arm away.* RUTH, *brought back to herself, is overcome with confusion.*] So now you know why I'm going. It's for that reason—that and one other.

RUTH—You've another? Then you must tell me that, too.

ROBERT—[*Looking at her searchingly. She drops her eyes before his gaze.*] I wonder if I ought to. I wonder if you'd really care to hear it—if you knew. You'll promise not to be angry—whatever it is?

RUTH—[*Softly, her face still averted.*] Yes, I promise.

ROBERT—[*Simply.*] I love you. That's the other reason.

RUTH—[*Hiding her face in her hands.*] Oh, Rob!

ROBERT—You must let me finish now I've begun. I wasn't going to tell you, but I feel I have to. It

can't matter to you now that I'm going so far away, and for so long—perhaps forever. I've loved you all these years, but the realization of it never came to me 'til I agreed to go away with Uncle Dick. Then I thought of leaving you, and the pain of that thought revealed the truth to me in a flash—that I loved you, *had* loved you as long as I could remember. [*He gently pulls one of* RUTH'S *hands away from her face.*] You musn't mind my telling you this, Ruth. I realize how impossible it all is—and I understand; for the revelation of my own love seemed to open my eyes to the love of others. I saw Andy's love for you —and I knew that you must love him.

RUTH—[*Breaking out stormily.*] I don't! I don't love Andy! I don't! [ROBERT *stares at her in stupid astonishment.* RUTH *weeps hysterically.*] Whatever —put such a fool notion into—into your head? [*She suddenly throws her arms about his neck and hides her head on his shoulder.*] Oh, Rob! Don't go away! Please! You mustn't, now! You can't! I won't let you! It'd break my—my heart!

ROBERT—[*The expression of stupid bewilderment giving way to one of overwhelming joy. He presses her close to him—slowly and tenderly.*] Do you mean that—that you love me?

RUTH—[*Sobbing.*] Yes, yes—of course I do—what d'you s'pose? [*She lifts up her head and looks into his eyes with a tremulous smile.*] You stupid thing! [*He kisses her.*] I've loved you right along.

ROBERT—[*Mystified.*] But you and Andy were always together!

RUTH—Because you never seemed to want to go any place with me. You were always reading an old book, and not paying any attention to me. I was too proud to let you see I cared because I thought the year you had away to college had made you stuck-up and you thought yourself too educated to waste any time on me.

ROBERT—[*Kissing her.*] And I was thinking——[*With a laugh.*] What fools we've both been!

RUTH—[*Overcome by a sudden fear.*] You won't go away on the trip, will you, Rob? You'll tell them you can't go on account of me, won't you? You can't go now! You can't!

ROBERT—[*Bewildered.*] Perhaps—you can come too.

RUTH—Oh, Rob, don't be so foolish. You know I can't. Who'd take care of Ma? She has no one in the world but me. I can't leave her—the way she is. It'd be different if she was well and healthy like other people. Don't you see I couldn't go—on her account?

ROBERT—[*Vaguely.*] I could go—and then send for you both—when I'd settled some place out there.

RUTH—Ma never could. She'd never leave the farm for anything; and she couldn't make a trip any where 'til she got better—if she ever does. And oh, Rob, I wouldn't want to live in any of those outlandish places you were going to. I couldn't stand it there, I know I couldn't—not knowing anyone. I

makes me afraid just to think of it. I've never been away from here, hardly and—I'm just a home body, I'm afraid. [*She clings to him imploringly.*] Please don't go—not now. Tell them you've decided not to. They won't mind. I know your mother and father'll be glad. They'll all be. They don't want you to go so far away from them. Please, Rob! We'll be so happy here together where it's natural and we know things. Please tell me you won't go!

ROBERT—[*Face to face with a definite, final decision, betrays the conflict going on within him.*] But —Ruth—I—Uncle Dick——

RUTH—He won't mind when he knows it's for your happiness to stay. How could he? [*As* ROBERT *remains silent she bursts into sobs again.*] Oh, Rob! And you said—you loved me!

ROBERT—[*Conquered by this appeal—an irrevocable decision in his voice.*] I won't go, Ruth. I promise you. There! Don't cry! [*He presses her to him, stroking her hair tenderly. After a pause he speaks with happy hopefulness.*] Perhaps after all Andy was right—righter than he knew—when he said I could find all the things I was seeking for here, at home on the farm. The mystery and the wonder—our love should bring them home to us. I think love must have been the secret—the secret that called to me from over the world's rim—the secret beyond every horizon; and when I did not come, it came to me. [*He clasps* RUTH *to him fiercely.*] Oh, Ruth, you

are right! Our love is sweeter than any distant dream. It is the meaning of all life, the whole world. The kingdom of heaven is within—*us!* [*He kisses her passionately and steps to the ground, lifting* RUTH *in his arms and carrying her to the road where he puts her down.*]

RUTH—[*With a happy laugh.*] My, but you're strong!

ROBERT—Come! We'll go and tell them at once.

RUTH—[*Dismayed.*] Oh, no, don't, Rob, not 'til after I've gone. Then you can tell your folks and I'll tell Ma when I get her home. There'd be bound to be such a scene with them all together.

ROBERT—[*Kissing her—gaily.*] As you like—little Miss Common Sense!

RUTH—Let's go, then. [*She takes his hand, and they start to go off left.* ROBERT *suddenly stops and turns as though for a last look at the hills and the dying sunset flush.*]

ROBERT—[*Looking upward and pointing.*] See! The first star. [*He bends down and kisses her tenderly.*] *Our* star!

RUTH—[*In a soft murmur.*] Yes. Our very own star. [*They stand for a moment looking up at it, their arms around each other. Then* RUTH takes his *hand again and starts to lead him away.*] Come, Rob, let's go. [*His eyes are fixed again on the horizon as he half turns to follow her.* RUTH *urges.*] We'll be late for supper, Rob.

ROBERT—[*Shakes his head impatiently, as though he were throwing off some disturbing thought—with a laugh.*] All right. We'll run then. Come on! [*They run off laughing as*

[*The Curtain Falls*]

ACT ONE

SCENE TWO

SCENE—*The sitting room of the Mayo farm house about nine o'clock the same night. On the left, two windows looking out on the fields. Against the wall between the windows, an old-fashioned walnut desk. In the left corner, rear, a sideboard with a mirror. In the rear wall to the right of the sideboard, a window looking out on the road. Next to the window a door leading out into the yard. Farther right, a black horse-hair sofa, and another door opening on a bedroom. In the corner, a straight-backed chair. In the right wall, near the middle, an open doorway leading to the kitchen. Farther forward a double-heater stove with coal scuttle, etc. In the center of the newly carpeted floor, an oak dining-room table with a red cover. In the center of the table, a large oil reading lamp. Four chairs, three rockers with crocheted tidies on their backs, and one straight-backed, are placed about the table. The walls are papered a dark red with a scrolly-figured pattern.*

Everything in the room is clean, well-kept, and

in its exact place, yet there is no suggestion of primness about the whole. Rather the atmosphere is one of the orderly comfort of a simple, hard-earned prosperity, enjoyed and maintained by the family as a unit.

JAMES MAYO, *his wife, her brother,* CAPTAIN DICK SCOTT, *and* ANDREW *are discovered.* MRS. MAYO *is a slight, round-faced, rather prim-looking woman of fifty-five who had once been a school teacher. The labors of a farmer's wife have bent but not broken her, and she retains a certain refinement of movement and expression foreign to the Mayo part of the family. Whatever of resemblance* ROBERT *has to his parents may be traced to her. Her brother, the* CAPTAIN, *is short and stocky, with a weather-beaten, jovial face and a white moustache—a typical old salt, loud of voice and given to gesture. He is fifty-eight years old.*

JAMES MAYO *sits in front of the table. He wears spectacles, and a farm journal which he has been reading lies in his lap.* THE CAPTAIN *leans forward from a chair in the rear, his hands on the table in front of him.* ANDREW *is tilted back on the straight-backed chair to the left, his chin sunk forward on his chest, staring at the carpet, preoccupied and frowning.*

As the Curtain rises the CAPTAIN *is just finishing the relation of some sea episode. The others*

are pretending an interest which is belied by the absent-minded expressions on their faces.

THE CAPTAIN—[*Chuckling.*] And that mission woman, she hails me on the dock as I was acomin' ashore, and she says—with her silly face all screwed up serious as judgment—"Captain," she says, "would you be so kind as to tell me where the sea-gulls sleeps at nights?" Blow me if them warn't her exact words! [*He slaps the table with the palm of his hands and laughs loudly. The others force smiles.*] Ain't that just like a fool woman's question? And I looks at her serious as I could, "Ma'm," says I, "I couldn't rightly answer that question. I ain't never seed a sea-gull in his bunk yet. The next time I hears one snorin'," I says, "I'll make a note of where he's turned in, and write you a letter 'bout it." And then she calls me a fool real spiteful and tacks away from me quick. [*He laughs again uproariously.*] So I got rid of her that way. [*The others smile but immediately relapse into expressions of gloom again.*]

MRS. MAYO—[*Absent-mindedly—feeling that she has to say something.*] But when it comes to that, where *do* sea-gulls sleep, Dick?

SCOTT—[*Slapping the table.*] Ho! Ho! Listen to her, James. 'Nother one! Well, if that don't beat all hell—'scuse me for cussin', Kate.

MAYO—[*With a twinkle in his eyes.*] They unhitch their wings, Katey, and spreads 'em out on a wave for a bed.

SCOTT—And then they tells the fish to whistle to 'em when it's time to turn out. Ho! Ho!

MRS. MAYO—[*With a forced smile.*] You men folks are too smart to live, aren't you? [*She resumes her knitting.* MAYO *pretends to read his paper;* ANDREW *stares at the floor.*]

SCOTT—[*Looks from one to the other of them with a puzzled air. Finally he is unable to bear the thick silence a minute longer, and blurts out:*] You folks look as if you was settin' up with a corpse. [*With exaggerated concern.*] God A'mighty, there ain't anyone dead, be there?

MAYO—[*Sharply.*] Don't play the dunce, Dick! You know as well as we do there ain't no great cause to be feelin' chipper.

SCOTT—[*Argumentatively.*] And there ain't no cause to be wearin' mourning, either, I can make out.

MRS. MAYO—[*Indignantly.*] How can you talk that way, Dick Scott, when you're taking our Robbie away from us, in the middle of the night, you might say, just to get on that old boat of yours on time! I think you might wait until morning when he's had his breakfast.

SCOTT—[*Appealing to the others hopelessly.*] Ain't that a woman's way o' seein' things for you? God A'mighty, Kate, I can't give orders to the tide that it's got to be high just when it suits me to have it. I ain't gettin' no fun out o' missin' sleep and leavin' here at six bells myself. [*Protestingly.*] And the *Sunda* ain't an old ship—leastways, not very old

—and she's good's she ever was. Your boy Robert'll be as safe on board o' her as he'd be home in bed here.

MRS. MAYO—How can you say that, Dick, when we read in almost every paper about wrecks and storms, and ships being sunk.

SCOTT—You've got to take your chances with such things. They don't happen often—not nigh as often as accidents do ashore.

MRS. MAYO—[*Her lips trembling.*] I wish Robbie weren't going — not so far away and for so long.

MAYO—[*Looking at her over his glasses—consolingly.*] There, Katey!

MRS. MAYO—[*Rebelliously.*] Well, I *do* wish he wasn't! It'd be different if he'd ever been away from home before for any length of time. If he was healthy and strong too, it'd be different. I'm so afraid he'll be taken down ill when you're miles from land, and there's no one to take care of him.

MAYO—That's the very reason you was willin' for him to go, Katey—'count o' your bein' 'fraid for his health.

MRS. MAYO—[*Illogically.*] But he seems to be all right now without Dick taking him away.

SCOTT—[*Protestingly.*] You'd think to hear you, Kate, that I was kidnappin' Robert agin your will. Now I ain't asayin' I ain't tickled to death to have him along, because I be. It's a'mighty lonesome for a captain on a sailin' vessel at times, and Robert'll be company for me. But what I'm sayin' is, I didn't

propose it. I never even suspicioned that he was hankerin' to ship out, or that you'd let him go 'til you and James speaks to me 'bout it. And now you blames me for it.

MAYO—That's so. Dick's speaking the truth, Katey.

SCOTT—You shouldn't be taking it so hard, 's far as I kin see. This vige'll make a man of him. I'll see to it he learns how to navigate, 'n' study for a mate's c'tificate right off—and it'll give him a trade for the rest of his life, if he wants to travel.

MRS. MAYO.—But I don't want him to travel all his life. You've got to see he comes home when this trip is over. Then he'll be all well, and he'll want to —to marry—[ANDREW *sits forward in his chair with an abrupt movement.*]—and settle down right here.

SCOTT—Well, in any case it won't hurt him to learn things when he's travellin'. And then he'll get to see a lot of the world in the ports we put in at, 'n' that 'll help him afterwards, no matter what he takes up.

MRS. MAYO—[*Staring down at the knitting in her lap—as if she hadn't heard him.*] I never realized how hard it was going to be for me to have Robbie go—or I wouldn't have considered it a minute. [*On the verge of tears.*] Oh, if only he wouldn't go!

SCOTT—It ain't no good goin' on that way, Kate, now it's all settled.

MRS. MAYO—[*Half-sobbing.*] It's all right for *you* to talk. You've never had any children of your

own, and you don't know what it means to be parted from them—and Robbie my youngest, too. [ANDREW *frowns and fidgets in his chair.*]

MAYO—[*A trace of command in his voice.*] No use takin' on so, Katey! It's best for the boy. We've got to take that into consideration—no matter how much we hate to lose him. [*Firmly.*] And like Dick says, it's all settled now.

ANDREW—[*Suddenly turning to them.*] There's one thing none of you seem to take into consideration—that Rob wants to go. He's dead set on it. He's been dreaming over this trip ever since it was first talked about. It wouldn't be fair to him not to have him go. [*A sudden thought seems to strike him and he continues doubtfully.*] At least, not if he still feels the same way about it he did when he was talking to me this evening.

MAYO—[*With an air of decision.*] Andy's right, Katey. Robert wants to go. That ends all argyment, you can see that.

MRS. MAYO—[*Faintly, but resignedly.*] Yes. I suppose it must be, then.

MAYO—[*Looking at his big silver watch.*] It's past nine. Wonder what's happened to Robert. He's been gone long enough to wheel the widder to home, certain. He can't be out dreamin' at the stars his last night.

MRS. MAYO—[*A bit reproachfully.*] Why didn't you wheel Mrs. Atkins back tonight, Andy? You usually do when she and Ruth come over.

ANDREW—[*Avoiding her eyes.*] I thought maybe Robert wanted to go tonight. He offered to go right away when they were leaving.

MRS. MAYO—He only wanted to be polite.

ANDREW—[*Gets to his feet.*] Well, he'll be right back, I guess. [*He turns to his father.*] Guess I'll go take a look at the black cow, Pa—see if she's ailing any.

MAYO—Yes—better had, son. [ANDREW *goes into the kitchen on the right.*]

SCOTT—[*As he goes out—in a low tone.*] *There's* the boy that would make a good, strong sea-farin' man—if he'd a mind to.

MAYO—[*Sharply.*] Don't you put no such fool notions in Andys head, Dick—or you 'n' me's goin' to fall out. [*Then he smiles.*] You couldn't tempt him, no ways. Andy's a Mayo bred in the bone, and he's a born farmer, and a damn good one, too. He'll live and die right here on this farm, like I expect to. [*With proud confidence.*] And he'll make this one of the slickest, best-payin' farms in the state, too, afore he gits through!

SCOTT—Seems to me it's a pretty slick place right now.

MAYO—[*Shaking his head.*] It's too small. We need more land to make it amount to much, and we ain't got the capital to buy it. [ANDREW *enters from the kitchen. His hat is on, and he carries a lighted lantern in his hand. He goes to the door in the rear leading out.*]

ANDREW—[*Opens the door and pauses.*] Anything else you can think of to be done, Pa?

MAYO—No, nothin' I know of. [ANDREW *goes out, shutting the door.*]

MRS. MAYO—[*After a pause.*] What's come over Andy tonight, I wonder? He acts so strange.

MAYO—He does seem sort o' glum and out of sorts. It's 'count o' Robert leavin', I s'pose. [*To* SCOTT.] Dick, you wouldn't believe how them boys o' mine sticks together. They ain't like most brothers. They've been thick as thieves all their lives, with nary a quarrel I kin remember.

SCOTT—No need to tell me that. I can see how they take to each other.

MRS. MAYO—[*Pursuing her train of thought.*] Did you notice, James, how queer everyone was at supper? Robert seemed stirred up about something; and Ruth was so flustered and giggly; and Andy sat there dumb, looking as if he'd lost his best friend; and all of them only nibbled at their food.

MAYO—Guess they was all thinkin' about tomorrow, same as us.

MRS. MAYO—[*Shaking her head.*] No. I'm afraid somethin's happened—somethin' else.

MAYO—You mean—'bout Ruth?

MRS. MAYO—Yes.

MAYO—[*After a pause—frowning.*] I hope her and Andy ain't had a serious fallin'-out. I always sorter hoped they'd hitch up together sooner or later.

What d'you say, Dick? Don't you think them two'd pair up well?

SCOTT—[*Nodding his head approvingly.*] A sweet, wholesome couple they'd make.

MAYO—It'd be a good thing for Andy in more ways than one. I ain't what you'd call calculatin' generally, and I b'lieve in lettin' young folks run their affairs to suit themselves; but there's advantages for both o' them in this match you can't overlook in reason. The Atkins farm is right next to ourn. Jined together they'd make a jim-dandy of a place, with plenty o' room to work in. And bein' a widder with only a daughter, and laid up all the time to boot, Mrs. Atkins can't do nothin' with the place as it ought to be done. Her hired help just goes along as they pleases, in spite o' her everlastin' complainin' at 'em. She needs a man, a first-class farmer, to take hold o' things; and Andy's just the one.

MRS. MAYO—[*Abruptly.*] I don't think Ruth loves Andy.

MAYO—You don't? Well, maybe a woman's eyes is sharper in such things, but—they're always together. And if she don't love him now, she'll likely come around to it in time.

MAYO—[*As* MRS. MAYO *shakes her head.*] You seem mighty fixed in your opinion, Katey. How d'you know?

MRS. MAYO—It's just—what I feel.

MAYO—[*A light breaking over him.*] You don't mean to say—[MRS. MAYO *nods.* MAYO *chuckles*

scornfully.] Shucks! I'm losin' my respect for your eyesight, Katey. Why, Robert ain't got no time for Ruth, 'cept as a friend!

MRS. MAYO—[*Warningly.*] Sss-h-h! [*The door from the yard opens, and* ROBERT *enters. He is smiling happily, and humming a song to himself, but as he comes into the room an undercurrent of nervous uneasiness manifests itself in his bearing.*]

MAYO—So here you be at last! [ROBERT *comes forward and sits on* ANDY'S *chair.* MAYO *smiles slyly at his wife.*] What have you been doin' all this time—countin' the stars to see if they all come out right and proper?

ROBERT—There's only one I'll ever look for any more, Pa.

MAYO—[*Reproachfully.*] You might've even not wasted time lookin' for that one—your last night.

MRS. MAYO—[*As if she were speaking to a child.*] You ought to have worn your coat a sharp night like this, Robbie.

ROBERT—I wasn't cold, Ma. It's beautiful and warm on the road.

SCOTT—[*Disgustedly.*] God A'mighty, Kate, you treat Robert as if he was one year old!

ROBERT—[*With a smile.*] I'm used to that, Uncle.

SCOTT—[*With joking severity.*] You'll learn to forget all that baby coddlin' nights down off the Horn when you're haulin' hell-bent on the braces with a green sea up to your neck, and the old hooker doin'

summersaults under you. That's the stuff 'll put iron in your blood, eh Kate?

MRS. MAYO—[*Indignantly.*] What are you trying to do, Dick Scott—frighten me out of my senses? If you can't say anything cheerful, you'd better keep still.

SCOTT—Don't take on, Kate. I was only joshin' him and you.

MRS. MAYO—You have strange notions of what's a joke, I must say! [*She notices* ROBERT's *nervous uneasiness.*] You look all worked up over something, Robbie. What is it?

ROBERT—[*Swallowing hard, looks quickly from one to the other of them—then begins determinedly.*] Yes, there *is* something—something I must tell you—all of you. [*As he begins to talk* ANDREW *enters quietly from the rear, closing the door behind him, and setting the lighted lantern on the floor. He remains standing by the door, his arms folded, listening to* ROBERT *with a repressed expression of pain on his face.* ROBERT *is so much taken up with what he is going to say that he does not notice* ANDREW's *presence.*] Something I discovered only this evening—very beautiful and wonderful—something I did not take into consideration previously because I hadn't dared to hope that such happiness could ever come to me. [*Appealingly.*] You must all remember that fact, won't you?

MAYO—[*Frowning.*] Let's get to the point, son.

ROBERT—You were offended because you thought

I'd been wasting my time star-gazing on my last night at home. [*With a trace of defiance.*] Well, the point is this, Pa; it *isn't* my last night at home. I'm not going—I mean—I can't go tomorrow with Uncle Dick—or at any future time, either.

MRS. MAYO—[*With a sharp sigh of joyful relief.*] Oh, Robbie, I'm so glad!

MAYO—[*Astounded.*] You ain't serious, be you, Robert?

ROBERT—Yes, I mean what I say.

MAYO—[*Severely.*] Seems to me it's a pretty late hour in the day for you to be upsettin' all your plans so sudden!

ROBERT—I asked you to remember that until this evening I didn't know myself—the wonder which makes everything else in the world seem sordid and pitifully selfish by comparison. I had never dared to dream——

MAYO—[*Irritably.*] Come to the point. What is this foolishness you're talkin' of?

ROBERT—[*Flushing.*] Ruth told me this evening that—she loved me. It was after I'd confessed I loved her. I told her I hadn't been conscious of my love until after the trip had been arranged, and I realized it would mean—leaving her. That was the truth. I *didn't* know until then. [*As if justifying himself to the others.*] I hadn't intended telling her anything but—suddenly—I felt I must. I didn't think it would matter, because I was going away, and before I came back I was sure she'd have forgotten.

And I thought she loved—someone else. [*Slowly—his eyes shining.*] And then she cried and said it was I she'd loved all the time, but I hadn't seen it. [*Simply.*] So we're going to be married—very soon—and I'm happy—and that's all there is to say. [*Appealingly.*] But you see, I couldn't go away now—even if I wanted to.

MRS. MAYO—[*Getting up from her chair.*] Of course not! [*Rushes over and throws her arms about him.*] I knew it! I was just telling your father when you came in—and, Oh, Robbie, I'm so happy you're not going!

ROBERT—[*Kising her.*] I knew you'd be glad, Ma.

MAYO—[*Bewilderedly.*] Well, I'll be damned! You do beat all for gettin' folks' minds all tangled up, Robert. And Ruth too! Whatever got into her of a sudden? Why, I was thinkin'——

MRS. MAYO—[*Hurriedly—in a tone of warning.*] Never mind what you were thinking, James. It wouldn't be any use telling us that now. [*Meaningly.*] And what you were hoping for turns out just the same almost, doesn't it?

MAYO—[*Thoughtfully—beginning to see this side of the argument.*] Yes; I suppose you're right, Katey. [*Scratching his head in puzzlement.*] But how it ever come about! It do beat anything ever I heard. [*Finally he gets up with a sheepish grin and walks over to* ROBERT.] We're glad you ain't goin', your Ma and I, for we'd have missed you terrible, that's certain and sure; and we're glad you've

found happiness. Ruth's a fine girl and'll make a good wife to you.

ROBERT—[*Much moved.*] Thank you, Pa. [*He grips his father's hand in his.*]

ANDREW—[*His face tense and drawn comes forward and holds out his hand, forcing a smile.*] I guess it's my turn to offer congratulations, isn't it?

ROBERT—[*With a startled cry when his brother appears before him so suddenly.*] Andy! [*Confused.*] Why—I—I didn't see you. Were you here when——

ANDREW—I heard everything you said; and here's wishing you every happiness, you and Ruth. You both deserve the best there is.

ROBERT—[*Taking his hand.*] Thanks, Andy, it's fine of you to—— [*His voice dies away as he sees the pain in* ANDREW'S *eyes.*]

ANDREW—[*Giving his brother's hand a final grip.*] Good luck to you both! [*He turns away and goes back to the rear when he bends over the lantern, fumbling with it to hide his emotion from the others.*]

MRS. MAYO—[*To the* CAPTAIN, *who has been too flabbergasted by* ROBERT'S *decision to say a word.*] What's the matter, Dick? Aren't you going to congratulate Robbie?

SCOTT—[*Embarrassed.*] Of course I be! [*He gets to his feet and shakes* ROBERT'S *hand, muttering a vague*] Luck to you, boy. [*He stands beside* ROBERT *as if he wanted to say something more but doesn't know how to go about it.*]

ROBERT—Thanks, Uncle Dick.

SCOTT—So you're not acomin' on the *Sunda* with me? [*His voice indicates disbelief.*]

ROBERT—I can't, Uncle—not now. I'm very grateful to you for having wanted to take me. I wouldn't miss it for anything else in the world under any other circumstances. [*He sighs unconsciously.*] But you see I've found—a bigger dream.

SCOTT—[*Gruffly.*] Bring the girl along with you. I'll fix it so there's room.

MRS. MAYO—[*Sharply.*] How can you propose such a crazy idea, Dick—to take a young girl on a sail-boat all over the world and not a woman on the boat but herself. Have you lost your senses?

ROBERT—[*Regretfully.*] It would be wonderful if we could both go with you, Uncle—but it's impossible. Ruth couldn't go on account of her mother, and besides, I'm afraid she doesn't like the idea of the sea.

SCOTT—[*Putting all his disapproval into an exclamation.*] Humph! [*He goes back and sits down at the table.*]

ROBERT—[*In joyous high spirits.*] I want you all to understand one thing—I'm not going to be a loafer on your hands any longer. This means the beginning of a new life for me in every way. I'm sick and disgusted at myself for sitting around and seeing everyone else hard at work, while all I've been doing is keep the accounts—a couple of hours work a week! I'm going to settle right down and take a real interest in the farm, and do my share. I'll prove to you, Pa,

that I'm as good a Mayo as you are—or Andy, when I want to be.

MAYO—[*Kindly but skeptically.*] That's the right spirit, Robert, but it ain't needful for you to——

MRS. MAYO—[*Interrupting him.*] No one said you weren't doing your part, Robbie. You've got to look out for——

ROBERT—I know what you're going to say, and that's another false idea you've got to get out of your heads. It's ridiculous for you to persist in looking on me as an invalid. I'm as well as anyone, and I'll prove it to you if you'll give me half a chance. Once I get the hang of it, I'll be able to do as hard a day's work as any one. You wait and see.

MAYO—Ain't none of us doubts your willin'ness, but you ain't never learned——

ROBERT—Then I'm going to start learning right away, and you'll teach me, won't you?

MAYO—[*Mollifyingly.*] Of course I will, boy, and be glad to, only you'd best go easy at first.

ROBERT—With the two farms to look after, you'll need me; and when I marry Ruth I'll have to know how to take care of things for her and her mother.

MAYO—That's so, son.

SCOTT—[*Who has listened to this conversation in mingled consternation and amazement.*] You don't mean to tell me you're goin' to let him stay, do you, James?

MAYO—Why, things bein' as they be, Robert's free to do as he's a mind to.

MRS. MAYO—*Let him!* The very idea!

SCOTT—[*More and more ruffled.*] Then all I got to say is, you're a soft, weak-willed critter to be permittin' a boy—and women, too—to be layin' your course for you wherever they damn pleases.

MAYO—[*Slyly amused.*] It's just the same with me as 'twas with you, Dick. You can't order the tides on the seas to suit you, and I ain't pretendin' I can reg'late love for young folks.

SCOTT—[*Scornfully.*] Love! They ain't old enough to know love when they sight it! Love! I'm ashamed of you, Robert, to go lettin' a little huggin' and kissin' in the dark spile your chances to make a man out o' yourself. It ain't common sense—no siree, it ain't—not by a hell of a sight! [*He pounds the table with his fists in exasperation.*]

ROBERT—[*Smiling.*] I'm afraid I can't help it, Uncle.

SCOTT—Humph! You ain't got any sand, that's what! And you, James Mayo, lettin' boys and women run things to the devil and back—you've got less sense than he has!

MAYO—[*With a grin.*] If Robert can't help it, I'm sure I ain't able, Dick.

MRS. MAYO—[*Laughing provokingly at her brother.*] A fine one you are to be talking about love, Dick—an old cranky bachelor like you. Goodness sakes!

SCOTT—[*Exasperated by their joking.*] I've

never been a damn fool like most, if that's what you're steerin' at.

MRS. MAYO—[*Tauntingly.*] Sour grapes, aren't they, Dick? [*She laughs.* ROBERT *and his father chuckle.* SCOTT *sputters with annoyance.*] Good gracious, Dick, you do act silly, flying into a temper over nothing.

SCOTT—[*Indignantly.*] Nothin'! Is that what you call it—nothin'? You talk as if I wasn't concerned nohow in this here business. Seems to me I've got a right to have my say. Ain't I gone to all sorts o' trouble gettin' the sta'b'd cabin all cleaned out and painted and fixed up so's that Robert o' yours 'd be comfortable? Ain't I made all arrangements with the owners and stocked up with some special grub all on Robert's account?

ROBERT—You've been fine, Uncle Dick; and I appreciate it. Truly.

MAYO—'Course; we all does, Dick.

MRS. MAYO—And don't spoil it now by getting angry at us.

SCOTT—[*Unplacated.*] It's all right for you to say don't this and don't that; but you ain't seen things from my side of it. I've been countin' sure on havin' Robert for company on this vige—to sorta talk to and show things to, and teach, kinda, and I got my mind so set on havin' him I'm goin' to be double lonesome this vige. [*He pounds on the table, attempting to cover up this confession of weakness.*] Darn all this silly lovin' business, anyway.

MRS. MAYO—[*Touched.*] It's too bad you have to be so lonesome, Dick. Why don't you give up the old boat? You've been on the sea long enough, heaven's knows. Why don't you make up your mind and settle down here with us?

SCOTT—[*Emphatically.*] And go diggin' up the dirt and plantin' things? Not by a hell of a sight! You can have all the darned dirt in the earth for all o' me. I ain't sayin' it ain't all right—if you're made that way—but *I ain't.* No settlin' down for me. No sirree! [*Irritably.*] But all this talk ain't tellin' me what I'm to do with that sta'b'd cabin I fixed up. It's all painted white, an a bran new mattress on the bunk, 'n' new sheets 'n' blankets 'n' things. And Chips built in a book-case so's Robert could take his books along—with a slidin' bar fixed across't it, mind, so's they couldn't fall out no matter how she rolled. [*With excited consternation.*] What d'you suppose my officers is goin' to think when there's no one comes aboard to occupy that sta'b'd cabin? And the men what did the work on it—what'll *they* think? [*He shakes his finger indignantly.*] They're liable as not to suspicion it was a *woman* I'd planned to ship along, and that she gave me the go-by at the last moment! [*He wipes his perspiring brow in anguish at this thought.*] Gawd A'mighty! They're only lookin' to have the laugh on me for something like that. They're liable to b'lieve anything, those fellers is!

MAYO—[*With a wink.*] Then there's nothing to it but for you to get right out and hunt up a wife some-

wheres for that spic 'n' span cabin. She'll have to be a pretty one, too, to match it. [*He looks at his watch with exaggerated concern.*] You ain't got much time to find her, Dick.

SCOTT—[*As the others smile—sulkily.*] You kin go to thunder, Jim Mayo!

ANDREW—[*Comes forward from where he has been standing by the door, rear, brooding. His face is set in a look of grim determination.*] You needn't worry about that spare cabin, Uncle Dick, if you've a mind to take me in Robert's place.

ROBERT—[*Turning to him quickly.*] Andy! [*He sees at once the fixed resolve in his brother's eyes, and realizes immediately the reason for it—in consternation.*] Andy, you mustn't!

ANDREW—You've made your decision, Rob, and now I've made mine. You're out of this, remember.

ROBERT—[*Hurt by his brother's tone.*] But Andy——

ANDREW—Don't interfere, Rob—that's all I ask. [*Turning to his uncle.*] You haven't answered my question, Uncle Dick.

SCOTT—[*Clearing his throat, with an uneasy side glance at* JAMES MAYO *who is staring at his elder son as if he thought he had suddenly gone mad.*] O' course, I'd be glad to have you, Andy.

ANDREW—It's settled then. I can pack the little I want to take in a few minutes.

MRS. MAYO—Don't be a fool, Dick. Andy's only joking you. He wouldn't go for anything.

SCOTT—[*Disgruntledly.*] It's hard to tell who's jokin' and who's not in this house.

ANDREW—[*Firmly.*] I'm not joking, Uncle Dick—and since I've got your permission, I'm going with you. [*As* SCOTT *looks at him uncertainly.*] You needn't be afraid I'll go back on my word. When I say I'll go, I'll go.

ROBERT—[*Hurt by the insinuation he feels in* ANDREW's *one.*] Andy! That isn't fair!

MRS. MAYO—[*Beginning to be disturbed.*] But I know he must be fooling us. Aren't you, Andy?

ANDREW—No, Ma, I'm not.

MAYO—[*Frowning.*] Seems to me this ain't no subject to joke over—not for Andy.

ANDREW—[*Facing his father.*] I agree with you, Pa, and I tell you again, once and for all, that I've made up my mind to go.

MAYO—[*Dumbfounded—unable to doubt the determination in* ANDREW's *voice—helplessly.*] But why, son? Why?

ANDREW—[*Evasively.*] I've always wanted to go, even if I ain't said anything about it.

ROBERT—Andy!

ANDREW—[*Half-angrily.*] You shut up, Rob! I told you to keep out of this. [*Turning to his father again.*] I didn't ever mention it because as long as Rob was going I knew it was no use; but now Rob's staying on here, and Uncle Dick wants someone along with him, there isn't any reason for me not to go.

MAYO—[*Breathing hard.*] No reason? Can you stand there and say that to me, Andrew?

MRS. MAYO—[*Hastily—seeing the gathering storm.*] He doesn't mean a word of it, James.

MAYO—[*Making a gesture to her to keep silence.*] Let me talk, Katey. [*In a more kindly tone.*] What's come over you so sudden, Andy? You know's well as I do that it wouldn't be fair o' you to run off at a moment's notice right now when we're up to our necks in hard work.

ANDREW—[*Avoiding his eyes.*] Rob'll hold his end up as soon as he learns.

MAYO—You know that ain't so. Robert was never cut out for a farmer, and you was.

ANDREW—You can easily get a man to do my work.

MAYO—[*Restraining his anger with an effort.*] It sounds strange to hear you, Andy, that I always thought had good sense, talkin' crazy like that. And you don't believe yourself one bit of what you've been sayin'—not 'less you've suddenly gone out of your mind. [*Scornfully.*] Get a man to take your place! Where'd I get him, tell me, with the shortage of farm labor hereabouts? And if I could get one, what in-t'rest d'you suppose he'd take beyond doin' as little work as he could for the money I paid him? You ain't been workin' here for no hire, Andy, that you kin give me your notice to quit like you've done. The farm is your'n as well as mine. You've always worked on it with that understanding; and what you're sayin' you

intend doin' is just skulkin' out o' your rightful responsibility.

ANDREW—[*Looking at the floor—simply.*] I'm sorry, Pa. [*After a slight pause.*] It's no use talking any more about it.

MRS. MAYO—[*In relief.*] There! I knew Andy'd come to his senses!

ANDREW—Don't get the wrong idea, Ma. I'm not backing out.

MAYO— You mean you're goin' in spite of—everythin'?

ANDREW—Yes. I'm going. I want to—and—I've got to. [*He looks at his father defiantly.*] I feel I oughtn't to miss this chance to go out into the world and see things, and—I want to go.

MAYO—[*With bitter scorn.*] So—you want to go out into the world and see thin's! [*His voice raised and quivering with anger.*] I never thought I'd live to see the day when a son o' mine 'd look me in the face and tell a bare-faced lie! [*Bursting out.*] You're a liar, Andy Mayo, and a mean one to boot!

MRS. MAYO—James!

ROBERT—Pa!

SCOTT—Steady there, Jim!

MAYO—[*Waving their protests aside.*] He is and he knows it.

ANDREW—[*His face flushed.*] I won't argue with you, Pa. You can think as badly of me as you like. I can't help that. Let's not talk about it any more.

I've made up my mind, and nothing you can say will change it.

MAYO—[*Shaking his finger at* ANDY, *in a cold rage.*] You know I'm speakin' truth—that's why you're afraid to argy! You lie when you say you want to go 'way—and see things! You ain't got no likin' in the world to go. Your place is right here on this farm—the place you was born to by nature—and you can't tell me no different. I've watched you grow up, and I know your ways, and they're my ways. You're runnin' against your own nature, and you're goin' to be a'mighty sorry for it if you do. You're tryin' to pretend to me something that don't fit in with your make-up, and it's damn fool pretendin' if you think you're foolin' me. 'S if I didn't know your real reason for runnin' away! And runnin' away's the only words to fit it. You're runnin' away 'cause you're put out and riled 'cause your own brother's got Ruth 'stead o' you, and——

ANDREW—[*His face crimson—tensely.*] Stop, Pa! I won't stand hearing that—not even from you!

MRS. MAYO—[*Rushing to* ANDY *and putting her arms about him protectingly.*] Don't mind him, Andy dear. He don't mean a word he's saying! [ROBERT *stands rigidly, his hands clenched, his face contracted by pain.* SCOTT *sits dumbfounded and open-mouthed.* ANDREW *soothes his mother who is on the verge of tears.*]

MAYO—[*In angry triumph.*] It's the truth, Andy

Mayo! And you ought to be bowed in shame to think of it!

ROBERT—[*Protestingly.*] Pa! You've gone far enough. It's a shame for you to talk that way!

MRS. MAYO—[*Coming from* ANDREW *to his father; puts her hands on his shoulders as though to try and push him back in the chair from which he has risen.*] Won't you be still, James? Please won't you?

MAYO—[*Looking at* ANDREW *over his wife's shoulder—stubbornly.*] The truth—God's truth!

MRS. MAYO—Sh-h-h! [*She tries to put a finger across his lips, but he twists his head away.*]

ANDREW—[*Who has regained control over himself.*] You're wrong, Pa, it isn't truth. [*With defiant assertiveness.*] I don't love Ruth. I never loved her, and the thought of such a thing never entered my head.

MAYO—[*With an angry snort of disbelief.*] Hump! You're pilin' lie on lie!

ANDREW—[*Losing his temper—bitterly.*] I suppose it'd be hard for you to explain anyone's wanting to leave this blessed farm except for some outside reason like that. You think these few measly acres are heaven, and that none'd want to ever do nothing in all their lives but stay right here and work like a dog all the time. But I'm sick and tired of it—whether you want to believe me or not—and that's why I'm glad to get a chance to move on. I've been sick and tired of farm life for a long time, and if I hadn't said anything about it, it was only to save

your feelings. Just because you love it here, you've got your mind set that I like it, too. You want me to stay on so's you can know that I'll be taking care of the rotten farm after you're gone. Well, Rob'll be here, and he's a Mayo, too. You can leave it in his hands.

ROBERT—Andy! Don't! You're only making it worse.

ANDREW—[*Sulkily.*] I don't care. I've done my share of work here. I've earned my right to quit when I want to. [*Suddenly overcome with anger and grief; with rising intensity.*] I'm sick and tired of the whole damn business. I hate the farm and every inch of ground in it. I'm sick of digging in the dirt and sweating in the sun like a slave without getting a word of thanks for it. [*Tears of rage starting to his eyes—hoarsely.*] I'm through, through for good and all; and if Uncle Dick won't take me on his ship, I'll find another. I'll get away somewhere, somehow.

MRS. MAYO—[*In a frightened voice.*] Don't you answer him, James. He doesn't know what he's saying to you. Don't say a word to him 'til he's in his right senses again. Please James, don't——

MAYO—[*Pushes her away from him; his face is drawn and pale with the violence of his passion. He glares at* ANDREW *as if he hated him.*] You dare to —you dare to speak like that to me? You talk like that 'bout this farm—the Mayo farm—where you was born—you—you—— [*He clenches his fist above*

his head and advances threateningly on ANDREW.] You damned whelp!

MRS. MAYO—[*With a shriek.*] James! [*She covers her face with her hands and sinks weakly into* MAYO'S *chair.* ANDREW *remains standing motionless, his face pale and set.*]

SCOTT—[*Starting to his feet and stretching his arms across the table toward* MAYO.] Easy there, Jim!

ROBERT—[*Throwing himself between father and brother.*] Stop! Are you mad?

MAYO—[*Grabs* ROBERT'S *arm and pushes him aside—then stands for a moment gasping for breath before* ANDREW. *He points to the door with a shaking finger.*] Yes—go!—go!—You're no son o' mine—no son o' mine! You can go to hell if you want to! Don't let me find you here—in the mornin'—or—or—I'll *throw* you out!

ROBERT—Pa! For God's sake!

[MRS. MAYO *bursts into noisy sobbing.*]

SCOTT—[*Placatingly.*] Ain't you goin' too far, Jim?

MAYO—[*Turning on him furiously.*] Shut up, you—you Dick! It's your fault—a lot o' this—you and your cussed ship! Don't you take him—if you do—don't you dare darken this door again. Let him go by himself and learn to starve—*starve!* [*He gulps convulsively and turns again to* ANDREW.] And you go—tomorrow mornin'—and by God—don't come back—don't dare come back—by God, not while

I'm livin'—or I'll—I'll—— [*He shakes over his muttered threat and strides toward the door rear, right.*]

MRS. MAYO—[*Rising and throwing her arms around him—hysterically.*] James! James! Where are you going?

MAYO—[*Incoherently.*] I'm goin'—to bed, Katey. It's late, Katey—it's late. [*He goes out.*]

MRS. MAYO—[*Following him, pleading hysterically.*] James! Take back what you've said to Andy. James! [*She follows him out.* ROBERT *and the* CAPTAIN *stare after them with horrified eyes.* ANDREW *stands rigidly looking straight in front of him, his fists clenched at his sides.*]

SCOTT—[*The first to find his voice—with an explosive sigh.*] Well, if he ain't the devil himself when he's roused! You oughtn't to have talked to him that way, Andy 'bout the damn farm, knowin' how touchy he is about it. [*With another sigh.*] Well, you won't mind what he's said in anger. He'll be sorry for it when he's calmed down a bit.

ANDREW—[*In a dead voice.*] No, he won't. You don't know him. [*Defiantly.*] What's said is said and can't be unsaid; and I've chosen.

SCOTT—[*Uncertainly.*] You don't mean—you're still a mind to go—go with me, do you?

ANDREW—[*Stubbornly.*] I haven't said I've changed my mind, have I? There's all the reason in the world for me to go—now. And I'm going if you're not afraid to take me after what he said.

ROBERT—[*With violent protest.*] Andy! You can't! Don't be a fool! This is all so stupid—and terrible.

ANDREW—[*Coldly.*] I'll talk to you in a minute, Rob, when we're alone. This is between Uncle and me. [*Crushed by his brother's cold indifference,* ROBERT *sinks down into a chair, holding his head in his hands.* ANDREW *turns again to* SCOTT.] If you don't want to take me, it's all right—there's no hard feelings. I can understand you don't like to fall out with Pa.

SCOTT—[*Indignantly.*] Gawd A'mighty, Andy, I ain't scared o' your Pa, nor no man livin,' I want t'have you come along! Only I was thinkin' o' Kate. We don't want her to have to suffer from his contrariness. Let's see. [*He screws up his brows in thought.*] S'posing we both lie a little, eh? I'll tell 'em you're not comin' with me, and you tell 'em you're goin' to the port to get another ship. We can leave here in the team together. That's natural enough. They can't suspect nothin' from that. And then you can write home the first port we touch and explain things. [*He winks at* ANDREW *cunningly.*] Are you on to the course?

ANDREW—[*Frowning.*] Yes—if you think it's best.

SCOTT—For your Ma's sake. I wouldn't ask it, else.

ANDREW—[*Shrugging his shoulders.*] All right then.

SCOTT—[*With a great sigh of relief—comes and slaps* ANDREW *on the back—beaming.*] I'm damned glad you're shippin' on, Andy. I like your spirit, and the way you spoke up to him. [*Lowering his voice to a cautious whisper.*] You was right not to want to waste your life plowin' dirt and pattin' it down again. The sea's the place for a young feller like you that isn't half dead 'n' alive. [*He gives* ANDY *a final approving slap.*] You'n' me 'll get along like twins, see if we don't. I'm durned glad you're comin', boy.

ANDREW—[*Wearily.*] Let's not talk about it any more, Uncle. I'm tired of talking.

SCOTT—Right! I'm goin' aloft to turn in, and leave you two alone. Don't forget to pack your dunnage. And git some sleep, if you kin. We'll want to sneak out extra early b'fore they're up. It'll do away with more argyments. Robert can drive us down to the town, and bring back the team. [*He goes to the door in the rear, left.*] Well, good night.

ANDREW—Good night. [SCOTT *goes out. The two brothers remain silent for a moment. Then* ANDREW *comes over to his brother and puts a hand on his back. He speaks in a low voice, full of feeling.*] Buck up, Rob. It ain't any use crying over spilt milk; and it'll all turn out for the best—let's hope. It couldn't be helped—what's happened.

ROBERT—[*Wildly.*] But it's a lie, Andy, a lie!

ANDREW—Of course it's a lie. You know it and I know it,—but that's all ought to know it.

ROBERT—Pa'll never forgive you. Oh, why did you want to anger him like that? You know how he feels about the farm. Oh, the whole affair is so senseless—and tragic. Why did you think you must go away?

ANDREW—You know better than to ask that. You know why. [*Fiercely.*] I can wish you and Ruth all the good luck in the world, and I do, and I mean it; but you can't expect me to stay around here and watch you two together, day after day—and me alone. You couldn't expect that! I couldn't stand it—not after all the plans I'd made to happen on this place thinking—— [*His voice breaks.*] Thinking she cared for me.

ROBERT—[*Putting a hand on his brother's arm.*] God! It's horrible! I feel so guilty—to think that I should be the cause of your suffering, after we've been such pals all our lives. If I could have foreseen what'd happen, I swear to you I'd have never said a word to Ruth. I swear I wouldn't have, Andy.

ANDREW—I know you wouldn't; and that would've been worse, for Ruth would've suffered then. [*He pats his brother's shoulder.*] It's best as it is. It had to be, and I've got to stand the gaff, that's all. Pa'll see how I felt—after a time. [*As* ROBERT *shakes his head*]—and if he don't—well, it can't be helped.

ROBERT—But think of Ma! God, Andy, you can't go! You can't!

ANDREW—[*Fiercely.*] I've got to go—to get away! I've got to, I tell you. I'd die here. I'd kill

myself! Can't you understand what it'd mean to me, how I'd suffer? You don't know how I'd planned—for Ruth and me—the hopes I'd had about what the future'd be like. You can't blame me to go. You'd do the same yourself. I'd go crazy here, bein' reminded every second of the day how my life's been smashed, and what a fool I'd made of myself. I'd have nothing to hope or live for. I've got to get away and try and forget, if I can. I never could stay here—seeing her. And I'd hate the farm if I stayed, hate it for bringin' things back. I couldn't take interest in the work any more, work with no purpose in sight. Can't you see what a hell it'd be? You love her too, Rob. Put yourself in my place, and remember I haven't stopped loving her, and couldn't if I was to stay. Would that be fair to you or to her? Put yourself in my place. [*He shakes his brother fiercely by the shoulder.*] What'd you do then? Tell me the truth! You love her. What'd you do? In spite of all hell, what'd you do?

ROBERT—[*Chokingly.*] I'd—I'd go, Andy! [*He buries his face in his hands with a shuddering sob.*] God!

ANDREW—[*Seeming to relax suddenly all over his body—in a low, steady voice.*] Then you know why I got to go; and there's nothing more to be said.

ROBERT—[*In a frenzy of rebellion.*] Why did this have to happen to us? It's damnable! [*He looks about him wildly, as if his vengeance were seeking the responsible fate.*]

ANDREW—[*Soothingly—again putting his hands on his brother's shoulder.*] It's no use fussing any more, Rob. It's done. [*Affectionately.*] You'll forget anything I said to hurt when I was mad, won't you? I wanted to keep you out of it.

ROBERT—Oh, Andy, it's me who ought to be asking your forgiveness for the suffering I've brought on you.

ANDREW—[*Forcing a smile.*] I guess Ruth's got a right to have who she likes; you ain't to blame for that. She made a good choice—and God bless her for it!

ROBERT—Andy! Oh, I wish I could tell you half I feel of how fine you are!

ANDREW—[*Interrupting him quickly.*] Shut up! Let's go to bed. We've talked long enough, and I've got to be up long before sun-up. You, too, if you're going to drive us down.

ROBERT—Yes. Yes.

ANDREW—[*Turning down the lamp.*] And I've got to pack yet. [*He yawns with utter weariness.*] I'm as tired as if I'd been plowing twenty-four hours at a stretch. [*Dully.*] I feel—dead. [ROBERT *covers his face again with his hands.* ANDREW *shakes his head as if to get rid of his thoughts, and continues with a poor attempt at cheery briskness.*] I'm going to douse the light. Come on. [*He slaps his brother on the back.* ROBERT *does not move.* ANDREW *bends over and blows out the lamp. His voice comes from the darkness.*] Don't sit there mourn-

ing, Rob. It'll all come out in the wash. Come on and get some sleep. Everything 'll turn out all right in the end. [ROBERT *can be heard stumbling to his feet, and the dark figures of the two brothers can be seen groping their way toward the doorway in the rear as*

[*The Curtain Falls*]

BEYOND THE HORIZON

ACT II

ACT TWO

SCENE ONE

SCENE—*Same as Act One, Scene Two. Sitting room of the farm house about half past twelve in the afternoon of a hot, sun-baked day in mid-summer, three years later. All the windows are open, but no breeze stirs the soiled white curtains. A patched screen door is in the rear. Through it the yard can be seen, its small stretch of lawn divided by the dirt path leading to the door from the gate in the white picket fence which borders the road.*

The room has changed, not so much in its outward appearance as in its general atmosphere. Little significant details give evidence of carelessness, of inefficiency, of an industry gone to seed. The chairs appear shabby from lack of paint; the table cover is spotted and askew; holes show in the curtains; a child's doll, with one arm gone, lies under the table; a hoe stands in a corner; a man's coat is flung on the couch in the rear; the desk is cluttered up with odds and ends; a number of books are piled carelessly on the

side-board. The noon enervation of the sultry, scorching day seems to have penetrated indoors, causing even inanimate objects to wear an aspect of despondent exhaustion.

A place is set at the end of the table, left, for someone's dinner. Through the open door to the kitchen comes the clatter of dishes being washed, interrupted at intervals by a woman's irritated voice and the peevish whining of a child.

At the rise of the curtain MRS. MAYO *and* MRS. ATKINS *are discovered sitting facing each other,* MRS. MAYO *to the rear,* MRS. ATKINS *to the right of the table.* MRS. MAYO'S *face has lost all character, disintegrated, become a weak mask wearing a helpless, doleful expression of being constantly on the verge of comfortless tears. She speaks in an uncertain voice, without assertiveness, as if all power of willing had deserted her.* MRS. ATKINS *is in her wheel chair. She is a thin, pale-faced, unintelligent looking woman of about forty-eight, with hard, bright eyes. A victim of partial paralysis for many years, condemned to be pushed from day to day of her life in a wheel chair, she has developed the selfish, irritable nature of the chronic invalid. Both women are dressed in black.* MRS. ATKINS *knits nervously as she talks. A ball of unused yarn, with needles stuck through it, lies on the table before* MRS. MAYO.

MRS. ATKKINS—[*With a disapproving glance at the place set on the table.*] Robert's late for his dinner again, as usual. I don't see why Ruth puts up with it, and I've told her so. Many's the time I've said to her "It's about time you put a stop to his nonsense. Does he suppose you're runnin' a hotel—with no one to help with things?" But she don't pay no attention. She's as bad as he is, a'most—thinks she knows better than an old, sick body like me.

MRS. MAYO—[*Dully.*] Robbie's always late for things. He can't help it, Sarah.

MRS. ATKINS—[*With a snort.*] Can't help it! How you do go on, Kate, findin' excuses for him! Anybody can help anything they've a mind to—as long as they've got health, and ain't rendered helpless like me, [*She adds as a pious afterthought*]—through the will of God.

MRS. MAYO—Robbie can't.

MRS. ATKINS—Can't! It do make me mad, Kate Mayo, to see folks that God gave all the use of their limbs to potterin' round and wastin' time doin' every thing the wrong way—and me powerless to help and at their mercy, you might say. And it ain't that I haven't pointed the right way to 'em. I've talked to Robert thousands of times and told him how things ought to be done. You know that, Kate Mayo. But d'you s'pose he takes any notice of what I say? Or Ruth, either—my own daughter? No, they think I'm a crazy, cranky old woman, half dead a'ready, and

the sooner I'm in the grave and out o' their way the better it'd suit them.

MRS. MAYO—You mustn't talk that way, Sarah. They're not as wicked as that. And you've got years and years before you.

MRS. ATKINS—You're like the rest, Kate. You don't know how near the end I am. Well, at least I can go to my eternal rest with a clear conscience. I've done all a body could do to avert ruin from this house. On their heads be it!

MRS. MAYO—[*With hopeless indifference.*] Things might be worse. Robert never had any experience in farming. You can't expect him to learn in a day.

MRS. ATKINS—[*Snappily.*] He's had three years to learn, and he's gettin' worse 'stead of better. He hasn't got it in him, that's what; and I do say it to you, Kate Mayo, even if he is your son. He doesn't want to learn. Everything I've told him he's that pig-headed he's gone and done the exact opposite. And now look where things are! They couldn't be worse, spite o' what you say. Not on'y your place but mine too is driftin' to rack and ruin, and I can't do nothin' to prevent, 'cause Ruth backs him up in his folly and shiftlessness.

MRS. MAYO—[*With a spark of assertiveness.*] You can't say but Robbie works hard, Sarah.

MRS. ATKINS—What good's workin' hard if it don't accomplish anythin', I'd like to know?

MRS. MAYO—Robbie's had bad luck against him.

MRS. ATKINS—Say what you've a mind to, Kate,

the proof of the puddin's in the eatin'; and you can't deny that things have been goin' from bad to worse ever since your husband died two years back.

MRS. MAYO—[*Wiping tears from her eyes with her handkerchief.*] It was God's will that he should be taken.

MRS. ATKINS—[*Triumphantly.*] It was God's punishment on James Mayo for the blasphemin' and denyin' of God he done all his sinful life! [MRS. MAYO *begins to weep softly.*] There, Kate, I shouldn't be remindin' you, I know. He's at peace, poor man, and forgiven, let's pray.

MR. MAYO—[*Wiping her eyes—simply.*] James was a good man.

MRS. ATKINS—[*Ignoring this remark.*] What I was sayin' was that since Robert's been in charge things've been goin' down hill steady. You don't know *how* bad they are. Robert don't let on to you what's happinin'; and you'd never see it yourself if 'twas under your nose. But, thank God, Ruth still comes to me once in a while for advice when she's worried near out of her senses by his goin's-on. Do you know what she told me last night? But I forgot, she said not to tell you—still I think you've got a right to know, and it's my duty not to let such things go on behind your back.

MRS. MAYO—[*Wearily.*] You can tell me if you want to.

MRS. ATKINS—[*Bending over toward her—in a low voice.*] Ruth was almost crazy about it. Robert told

her he'd have to mortgage the farm—said he didn't know how he'd pull through 'til harvest without it, and he can't get money any other way. [*She straightens up—indignantly.*] Now what do you think of your Robert?

MRS. MAYO—[*Resignedly.*] If it has to be——

MRS. ATKINS—You don't mean to say you're goin' to sign away your farm, Kate Mayo—after me warnin' you?

MRS. MAYO—I'll do what Robbie says is needful.

MRS. ATKINS—[*Holding up her hands.*] Well, of all the foolishness!—well, it's your farm, not mine, and I've nothin' more to say.

MRS. MAYO—Maybe Robbie'll manage till Andy gets back and sees to things. It can't be long now.

MRS. ATKINS—[*With keen interest.*] Ruth says Andy ought to turn up any day. When does Robert figger he'll get here?

MRS. MAYO—He says he can't calculate exactly on account o' the *Sunda* being a sail boat. Last letter he got was from England, the day they were sailing for home. That was over a month ago, and Robbie thinks they're overdue now.

MRS. ATKINS—We can give praise to God then that he'll be back in the nick o' time. I've got confidence in Andy and always did have, when it comes to farmin'; and he ought to be tired of travellin' and anxious to get home and settle down to work again.

MRS. MAYO—Andy *has* been working. He's head

officer on Dick's boat, he wrote Robbie. You know that.

MRS. ATKINS—That foolin' on ships is all right for a spell, but he must be right sick of it by this. Andy's got to the age where it's time he took hold of things serious and got this farm workin' as it ought to be again.

MRS. MAYO—[*Musingly.*] I wonder if he's changed much. He used to be so fine-looking and strong. [*With a sigh.*] Three years! It seems more like three hundred. [*Her eyes filling—piteously.*] Oh, if James could only have lived 'til he came back—and forgiven him!

MRS. ATKINS—He never would have—not James Mayo! Didn't he keep his heart hardened against him till the last in spite of all you and Robert did to soften him?

MRS. MAYO—[*With a feeble flash of anger.*] Don't you dare say that! [*Brokenly.*] Oh, I know deep down in his heart he forgave Andy, though he was too stubborn ever to own up to it. It was that brought on his death—breaking his heart just on account of his stubborn pride. [*She wipes her eyes with her handkerchief and sobs.*]

MRS. ATKINS—[*Piously.*] It was the will of God. [*The whining crying of the child sounds from the kitchen.* MRS. ATKINS *frowns irritably.*] Drat that young one! Seems as if she cries all the time on purpose to set a body's nerves on edge.

MRS. MAYO—[*Wiping her eyes.*] It's the heat

upsets her. Mary doesn't feel any too well these days, poor little child!

MRS. ATKINS—She gets it right from her Pa—bein' sickly all the time. You can't deny Robert was always ailin' as a child. [*She sighs heavily.*] It was a crazy mistake for them two to get married. I argyed against it at the time, but Ruth was so spelled with Robert's wild poetry notions she wouldn't listen to sense. Andy was the one would have been the match for her. I always thought so in those days, same as your James did; and I know she liked Andy. Then 'long comes Robert with his book-learnin' and high-fangled talk—and off she goes and marries him.

MRS. MAYO—I've often thought since it might have been better the other way. But Ruth and Robbie seem happy enough together.

MRS. ATKINS—At any rate it was God's work—and His will be done. [*The two women sit in silence for a moment.* RUTH *enters from the kitchen, carrying in her arms her two year old daughter,* MARY, *a pretty but sickly and aenemic looking child with a tear-stained face.* RUTH *has aged appreciably. Her face has lost its youth and freshness. There is a trace in her expression of something hard and spiteful. She sits in the rocker in front of the table and sighs wearily. She wears a gingham dress with a soiled apron tied around her waist.*]

RUTH—Land sakes, if this isn't a scorcher! That kitchen's like a furnace. Phew! [*She pushes the damp hair back from her forehead.*]

MRS. MAYO—Why didn't you call me to help with the dishes?

RUTH—[*Shortly.*] No. The heat in there'd kill you.

MARY—[*Sees the doll under the table and struggles on her mother's lap.*] Mary wants Dolly, Mama! Give Mary Dolly!

RUTH—[*Pulling her back.*] It's time for your nap. You can't play with Dolly now.

MARY—[*Commencing to cry whiningly.*] Mary wants Dolly!

MRS. ATKINS—[*Irritably.*] Can't you keep that child still? Her racket's enough to split a body's ears. Put her down and let her play with the doll if it'll quiet her.

RUTH—[*Lifting* MARY *to the floor.*] There! I hope you'll be satisfied and keep still. You're only to play for a minute, remember. Then you've got to take your nap. [MARY *sits down on the floor before the table and plays with the doll in silence.* RUTH *glances at the place set on the table.*] It's a wonder Rob wouldn't try to get to meals on time once in a while. Does he think I've nothing to do on a hot day like this but stand in that kitchen washing dishes?

MRS. MAYO—[*Dully.*] Something must have gone wrong again.

RUTH—[*Wearily.*] I s'pose so. Something's always going wrong these days, it looks like.

MRS. ATKINS—[*Snappily.*] It wouldn't if you possessed a bit of spunk. The idea of you permittin'

him to come in to meals at all hours—and you doin' the work! You ought to force him to have more consideration. I never heard of such a thin'. You mind my words and let him go to the kitchen and get his own once in a while, and see if he don't toe the mark. You're too easy goin', that's the trouble.

RUTH—Do stop your nagging at me, Ma! I'm sick of hearing you. I'll do as I please about it; and thank you for not interfering. [*She wipes her moist forehead—wearily.*] Phew! It's too hot to argue. Let's talk of something pleasant. [*Curiously.*] Didn't I hear you speaking about Andy a while ago?

MRS. MAYO—We were wondering when he'd get home.

RUTH—[*Brightening.*] Rob says any day now he's liable to drop in and surprise us—him and the Captain. I wonder if he's changed much—what he'll be like. It'll certainly look natural to see him around the farm again.

MRS. ATKINS—Let's hope the farm'll look more natural, too, when he's had a hand at it. The way thin's are now!

RUTH—[*Irritably.*] Will you stop harping on that, Ma? We all know things aren't as they might be. What's the good of your complaining all the time?

MRS. ATKINS—There, Kate Mayo! Ain't that just what I told you? I can't say a word of advice to my own daughter even, she's that stubborn and self-willed.

RUTH—[*Putting her hands over her ears—in exasperation.*] For goodness sakes, Ma!

MRS. MAYO—[*Dully.*] Never mind. Andy'll fix everything when he comes.

RUTH—[*Hopefully.*] Oh, yes, I know he will. He always did know just the right thing ought to be done. [*With weary vexation.*] It's a shame for him to come home and have to start in with things in such a topsy-turvy.

MRS. MAYO—Andy'll manage.

RUTH—[*Sighing.*] I s'pose it isn't Rob's fault things go wrong with him.

MRS. ATKINS—[*Scornfully.*] Hump! [*She fans herself nervously.*] Land o' Goshen, but it's bakin' in here! Let's go out in under the trees in back where there's a breath of fresh air. Come, Kate. [MRS. MAYO *gets up obediently and starts to wheel the invalid's chair toward the screen door.*] You better come too, Ruth. It'll do you good. Learn him a lesson and let him get his own dinner. Don't be such a fool.

RUTH—[*Going and holding the screen door open for them—listlessly.*] He wouldn't mind. He tells me never to wait—but he wouldn't know where to find anything.

MRS. ATKINS—Let him go hungry then—and serve him right.

RUTH—He wouldn't mind that, either. He doesn't eat much. But I can't go anyway. I've got to put baby to bed.

MRS. ATKINS—Let's go, Kate. I'm boilin' in here. [MRS. MAYO *wheels her out and off left.* RUTH *comes back and sits down in her chair.*]

RUTH—[*Mechanically.*] Come and let me take off your shoes and stockings, Mary, that's a good girl. You've got to take your nap now. [*The child continues to play as if she hadn't heard, absorbed in her doll. An eager expression comes over* RUTH's *tired face. She glances toward the door furtively—then gets up and goes to the desk. Her movements indicate a guilty fear of discovery. She takes a letter from a pigeon hole and retreats swiftly to her chair with it. She opens the envelope and reads the letter with great interest, a flush of excitement coming to her cheeks.* ROBERT *walks up the path and opens the screen door quietly and comes into the room. He, too, has aged. His shoulders are stooped as if under too great a burden. His eyes are dull and lifeless, his face burned by the sun and unshaven for days. Streaks of sweat have smudged the layer of dust on his cheeks. His lips drawn down at the corners, give him a hopeless, resigned expression. The three years have accentuated the weakness of his mouth and chin. He is dressed in overalls, laced boots, and a flannel shirt open at the neck.*]

ROBERT—[*Throwing his hat over on the sofa—with a great sigh of exhaustion.*] Phew! The sun's hot today! [RUTH *is startled. At first she makes an instinctive motion as if to hide the letter in her bosom. She immediately thinks better of this and sits with the*

letter in her hands looking at him with defiant eyes. He bends down and kisses her.]

RUTH—[*Feeling of her cheek—irritably.*] Why don't you shave? You look awful.

ROBERT—[*Indifferently.*] I forgot—and it's too much trouble this weather.

MARY—[*Throwing aside her doll, runs to him with a happy cry.*] Dada! Dada!

ROBERT—[*Swinging her up above his head—lovingly.*] And how's this little girl of mine this hot day, eh?

MARY—[*Screeching happily.*] Dada! Dada!

RUTH—[*In annoyance.*] Don't do that to her! You know it's time for her nap and you'll get her all waked up; then I'll be the one that'll have to sit beside her till she falls asleep.

ROBERT—[*Sitting down in the chair on the left of table and cuddling* MARY *on his lap.*] You needn't bother. I'll put her to bed.

RUTH—[*Shortly.*] You've got to get back to your work, I s'pose.

ROBERT—[*With a sigh.*] Yes, I was forgetting. [*He glances at the open letter on* RUTH'S *lap.*] Reading Andy's letter again? I should think you'd know it by heart by this time.

RUTH—[*Coloring as if she'd been accused of something—defiantly.*] I've got a right to read it, haven't I? He says it's meant for all of us.

ROBERT—[*With a trace of irritation.*] Right? Don't be so silly. There's no question of right. I

was only saying that you must know all that's in it after so many readings.

RUTH—Well, I don't. [*She puts the letter on the table and gets wearily to her feet.*] I s'pose you'll be wanting your dinner now.

ROBERT—[*Listlessly.*] I don't care. I'm not hungry. It's almost too hot to eat.

RUTH—And here I been keeping it hot for you!

ROBERT—[*Irritably.*] Oh, all right then. Bring it in and I'll try to eat.

RUTH—I've got to get her to bed first. [*She goes to lift* MARY *off his lap.*] Come, dear. It's after time and you can hardly keep your eyes open now.

MARY—[*Crying.*] No, no, I don't wanter sleep! [*Appealing to her father.*] Dada! No!

RUTH—[*Accusingly to* ROBERT.] There! Now see what you've done! I told you not to——

ROBERT—[*Shortly.*] Let her alone, then. She's all right where she is. She'll fall asleep on my lap in a minute if you'll stop bothering her.

RUTH—[*Hotly.*] She'll not do any such thing! She's got to learn to mind me, that she has! [*Shaking her finger at* MARY.] You naughty child! Will you come with Mama when she tells you for your own good?

MARY—[*Clinging to her father.*] No, Dada!

RUTH—[*Losing her temper.*] A good spanking's what you need, my young lady—and you'll get one from me if you don't mind better, d'you hear? [MARY *starts to whimper frightenedly.*]

ROBERT—[*With sudden anger.*] Leave her alone! How often have I told you not to threaten her with whipping? It's barbarous, and I won't have it. That's got to be understood. [*Soothing the wailing* MARY.] There! There, little girl! Baby mustn't cry. Dada won't like you if you do. Dada'll hold you and you must promise to go to sleep like a good little girl. Will you when Dada asks you?

MARY—[*Cuddling up to him.*] Yes, Dada.

RUTH—[*Looking at them, her pale face set and drawn.*] I won't be ordered by you! She's my child as much as yours. A fine one you are to be telling folks how to do things, you—— [*She bites her lips. Husband and wife look into each other's eyes with something akin to hatred in their expressions; then* RUTH *turns away with a shrug of affected indifference.*] All right, take care of her then, if you think it's so easy. You'll be whipping her yourself inside of a week. [*She walks away into the kitchen.*]

ROBERT—[*Smoothing* MARY'S *hair—tenderly.*] We'll show Mama you're a good little girl, won't we?

MARY—[*Crooning drowsily.*] Dada, Dada.

ROBERT—Let's see: Does your mother take off your shoes and stockings before your nap?

MARY—[*Nodding with half-shut eyes.*] Yes, Dada.

ROBERT—[*Taking off her shoes and stockings.*] We'll show Mama we know how to do those things, won't we? There's one old shoe off—and there's the other old shoe—and here's one old stocking—and there's the other old stocking. There we are, all nice

and cool and comfy. [*He bends down and kisses her.*] And now will you promise to go right to sleep if Dada takes you to bed? [MARY *nods sleepily.*] That's the good little girl. [*He gathers her up in his arms carefully and carries her into the bedroom. His voice can be heard faintly as he lulls the child to sleep.* RUTH *comes out of the kitchen and gets the plate from the table. She hears the voice from the room and tiptoes to the door to look in. Then she starts for the kitchen but stands for a moment thinking, a look of ill-concealed jealousy on her face. At a noise from inside she hurriedly disappears into the kitchen. A moment later* ROBERT *reenters. He comes forward and picks up the shoes and stockings which he shoves carelessly under the table. Then, seeing no one about, he goes to the sideboard and selects a book. Coming back to his chair, he sits down and immediately becomes absorbed in reading.* RUTH *returns from the kitchen bringing his plate heaped with food, and a cup of tea. She sets those before him and sits down in her former place.* ROBERT *continues to read, oblivious to the food on the table.*]

RUTH—[*After watching him irritably for a moment.*] For heaven's sakes, put down that old book! Don't you see your dinner's getting cold?

ROBERT—[*Closing his book.*] Excuse me, Ruth. I didn't notice. [*He picks up his knife and fork and begins to eat gingerly, without appetite.*]

RUTH—I should think you might have some feeling for me, Rob, and not always be late for meals. If you

think it's fun sweltering in that oven of a kitchen to keep things warm for you, you're mistaken.

ROBERT—I'm sorry, Ruth, really I am.

RUTH—That's what you always say; but you keep coming late just the same.

ROBERT—I know; and I can't seem to help it. Something crops up every day to delay me. I mean to be here on time.

RUTH—[*With a sigh.*] Mean-tos don't count.

ROBERT—[*With a conciliating smile.*] Then punish me, Ruth. Let the food get cold and don't bother about me. Just set it to one side. I won't mind.

RUTH—I'd have to wait just the same to wash up after you.

ROBERT—But I can wash up

RUTH—A nice mess there'd be then!

ROBERT—[*With an attempt at lightness.*] The food is lucky to be able to get cold this weather. [*As* RUTH *doesn't answer or smile he opens his book and resumes his reading, forcing himself to take a mouthful of food every now and then.* RUTH *stares at him in annoyance.*]

RUTH—And besides, you've got your own work that's got to be done.

ROBERT—[*Absent-mindedly, without taking his eyes from the book.*] Yes, of course.

RUTH—[*Spitefully.*] Work you'll never get done by reading books all the time.

ROBERT—[*Shutting the book with a snap.*] Why do you persist in nagging at me for getting pleasure

out of reading? Is it because—— [*He checks himself abruptly.*]

RUTH—[*Coloring.*] Because I'm too stupid to understand them, I s'pose you were going to say.

ROBERT—[*Shame-facedly.*] No—no. [*In exasperation.*] Oh, Ruth, why do you want to pick quarrels like this? Why do you goad me into saying things I don't mean? Haven't I got my share of troubles trying to work this cursed farm without your adding to them? You know how hard I've tried to keep things going in spite of bad luck——

RUTH—[*Scornfully.*] Bad luck!

ROBERT—And my own very apparent unfitness for the job, I was going to add; but you can't deny there's been bad luck to it, too. You know how unsuited I am to the work and how I hate it; and I've managed to fight along somehow. Why don't you take things into consideration? Why can't we pull together? We used to. I know it's hard on you also. Then why can't we help each other instead of hindering? That's the only way we can make life bearable for each other.

RUTH—[*Sullenly.*] I do the best I know how.

ROBERT—[*Gets up and puts his hand on her shoulder.*] I know you do. But let's both of us try to do better. We can both improve. Say a word of encouragement once in a while when things go wrong, even if it is my fault. You know the odds I've been up against since Pa died. I'm not a farmer. I've never claimed to be one. But there's nothing else

I can do under the circumstances, and I've got to pull things through somehow. With your help, I can do it. With you against me—— [*He shrugs his shoulders. There is a pause. Then he bends down and kisses her hair—with an attempt at cheerfulness.*] So you promise that; and I'll promise to be here when the clock strikes—and anything else you tell me to. Is it a bargain?

RUTH—[*Dully.*] I s'pose so.

ROBERT—The reason I was late today—it's more bad news, so be prepared.

RUTH—[*As if this was only what she expected.*] Oh! [*They are interrupted by the sound of a loud knock at the kitchen door.*] There's someone at the kitchen door. [*She hurries out. A moment later she reappears.*] It's Ben. He says he wants to see you.

ROBERT—[*Frowning.*] What's the trouble now, I wonder? [*In a loud voice.*] Come on in here, Ben. [*Ben slouches in from the kitchen. He is a hulking, awkward young fellow with a heavy, stupid face and shifty, cunning eyes. He is dressed in overalls, boots, etc., and wears a broad-brimmed hat of coarse straw pushed back on his head.*] Well, Ben, what's the matter?

BEN—[*Drawlingly.*] The mowin' machine's bust.

ROBERT—Why, that can't be. The man fixed it only last week.

BEN—It's bust just the same.

ROBERT—And can't you fix it?

BEN—No. Don't know what's the matter with the goll-darned thing. 'Twon't work, anyhow.

ROBERT—[*Getting up and going for his hat.*] Wait a minute and I'll go look it over. There can't be much the matter with it.

BEN—[*Impudently.*] Don't make no diff'rence t'me whether there be or not. I'm quittin'.

ROBERT—[*Anxiously.*] You're quitting? You don't mean you're throwing up your job here?

BEN—That's what! My month's up today and I want what's owin' t'me.

ROBERT—But why are you quitting now, Ben, when you know I've so much work on hand? I'll have a hard time getting another man at such short notice.

BEN—That's for you to figger. I'm quittin'.

ROBERT—But what's your reason? You haven't any complaint to make about the way you've been treated, have you?

BEN—No. 'Tain't that. [*Shaking his finger.*] Look-a-here. I'm sick o' bein' made fun at, that's what; an' I got a job up to Timms' place; an' I'm quittin' here.

ROBERT—Being made fun of? I don't understand you. Who's making fun of you?

BEN—They all do. When I drive down with the milk in the mornin' they all laughs and jokes at me—that boy up to Harris' and the new feller up to Slocum's, and Bill Evans down to Meade's, and all the rest on 'em.

ROBERT—That's a queer reason for leaving me

flat. Won't they laugh at you just the same when you're working for Timms?

BEN—They wouldn't dare to. Timms is the best farm hereabouts. They was laughin' at me for workin' for *you*, that's what! "How're things up to the Mayo place?" they hollers every mornin'. "What's Robert doin' now—pasturin' the cattle in the corn-lot? Is he seasonin' his hay with rain this year, same as last?" they shouts. "Or is he inventin' some 'lectrical milkin' engine to fool them dry cows o' his into givin' hard cider?" [*Very much ruffled.*] That's like they talks; and I ain't goin' to put up with it no longer. Everyone's always knowd me as a first-class hand hereabouts, and I ain't wantin' 'em to get no different notion. So I'm quittin' you. And I wants what's comin' to me.

ROBERT—[*Coldly.*] Oh, if that's the case, you can go to the devil.

BEN—This farm'd take me there quick 'nuff if I was fool 'nuff to stay.

ROBERT—[*Angrily.*] None of your damned cheek! You'll get your money tomorrow when I get back from town—not before!

BEN—[*Turning to doorway to kitchen.*] That suits me. [*As he goes out he speaks back over his shoulder.*] And see that I do get it, or there'll be trouble. [*He disappears and the slamming of the kitchen door is heard.*]

ROBERT—[*As* RUTH *comes from where she has been standing by the doorway and sits down dejectedly*

in her old place.] The stupid damn fool! And now what about the haying? That's an example of what I'm up against. No one can say I'm responsible for that.

RUTH—Yes you are! He wouldn't dare act that way with anyone else. They do like they please with you, because you don't know how to treat 'em. They think you're easy—and you are!

ROBERT—[*Indignantly.*] I suppose I ought to be a slave driver like the rest of the farmers—stand right beside them all day watching every move they make, and work them to their last ounce of strength? Well, I can't do it, and I won't do it!

RUTH—It's better to do that than have to ask your Ma to sign a mortgage on the place.

ROBERT—[*Distractedly.*] Oh, damn the place! [*He walks to the window on left and stands looking out.*]

RUTH—[*After a pause, with a glance at* ANDREW'S *letter on the table.*] It's lucky Andy's coming back.

ROBERT—[*Coming back and sitting down.*] Yes, Andy'll see the right thing to do in a jiffy. He has the knack of it; and he ought to be home any time now. The *Sunda's* overdue. Must have met with head winds all the way across.

RUTH—[*Anxiously.*] You don't think—anything's happened to the boat?

ROBERT—Trust Uncle Dick to bring her through all right! He's too good a sailor to be caught napping. Besies we'll never know the ship's here till

Andy steps in the door. He'll want to surprise us. [*With an affectionate smile.*] I wonder if the old chump's changed much? He doesn't seem to from his letters, does he? Still the same practical hard-head. [*Shaking his head.*] But just the same I doubt if he'll want to settle down to a hum-drum farm life, after all he's been through.

RUTH—[*Resentfully.*] Andy's not like you. He likes the farm.

ROBERT—[*Immersed in his own thoughts—enthusiastically.*] Gad, the things he's seen and experienced! Think of the places he's been! Hong-Kong, Yokohoma, Batavia, Singapore, Bangkok, Rangoon, Bombay—all the marvelous East! And Honolulu, Sydney, Buenos Aires! All the wonderful far places I used to dream about! God, how I envy him! What a trip! [*He springs to his feet and instinctively goes to the window and stares out at the horizon.*]

RUTH—[*Bitterly.*] I s'pose you're sorry now you didn't go?

ROBERT—[*Too occupied with his own thoughts to hear her—vindictively.*] Oh, those cursed hills out there that I used to think promised me so much! How I've grown to hate the sight of them! They're like the walls of a narrow prison yard shutting me in from all the freedom and wonder of life! [*He turns back to the room with a gesture of loathing.*] Sometimes I think if it wasn't for you, Ruth, and—[*his voice softening*]—little Mary, I'd chuck everything up and walk down the road with just one desire in my heart—

to put the whole rim of the world between me and those hills, and be able to breathe freely once more! [*He sinks down into his chair and smiles with bitter self-scorn.*] There I go dreaming again—my old fool dreams.

RUTH—[*In a low, repressed voice—her eyes smoldering.*] You're not the only one!

ROBERT—[*Buried in his own thoughts—bitterly.*] And Andy, who's had the chance—what has he got out of it? His letters read like the diary of a—of a farmer! "We're in Singapore now. It's a dirty hole of a place and hotter than hell. Two of the crew are down with fever and we're short-handed on the work. I'll be damn glad when we sail again, although tacking back and forth in these blistering seas is a rotten job too!" [*Scornfully.*] That's about the way he summed up his impressions of the East. Every port they touched at he found the same silly fault with. God! The only place he appeared to like was Buenos Aires—and that only because he saw the business opportunities in a booming country like Argentine.

RUTH—[*Her repressed voice trembling.*] You needn't make fun of Andy.

ROBERT—Perhaps I am too hard on him; but when I think—but what's the use? You know I wasn't making fun of Andy personally. No one loves him better than I do, the old chump! But his attitude toward things is—is rank, in my estimation.

RUTH—[*Her eyes flashing—bursting into uncon-*

trollable rage.] You was too making fun of him! And I ain't going to stand for it! You ought to be ashamed of yourself! A fine one you be! [ROBERT *stares at her in amazement. She continues furiously.*] A fine one to talk about anyone else—after the way you've ruined everything with your lazy loafing!—and the stupid way you do things!

ROBERT—[*Angrily.*] Stop that kind of talk, do you hear?

RUTH—You findin' fault—with your own brother who's ten times the man you ever was or ever will be—a thing like you to be talking. You're jealous, that's what! Jealous because he's made a man of himself, while you're nothing but a—but a—— [*She stutters incoherently, overcome by rage.*]

ROBERT—Ruth! Ruth! Don't you dare——! You'll be sorry for talking like that.

RUTH—I won't! I won't never be sorry! I'm only saying what I've been thinking for years.

ROBERT—[*Aghast.*] Ruth! You can't mean that!

RUTH—What do you think—living with a man like you—having to suffer all the time because you've never been man enough to work and do things like other people. But no! You never own up to that. You think you're so much better than other folks, with your college education, where you never learned a thing, and always reading your stupid books instead of working. I s'pose you think I ought to be *proud* to be your wife—a poor, ignorant thing like me! [*Fiercely.*] But I'm not. I hate it! I hate the sight

of you! Oh, if I'd only known! If I hadn't been such a fool to listen to your cheap, silly, poetry talk that you learned out of books! If I could have seen how you were in your true self—like you are now—I'd have killed myself before I'd have married you! I was sorry for it before we'd been together a month. I knew what you were really like—when it was too late.

ROBERT—[*His voice raised loudly.*] And now—I'm finding out what you're really like—what a—a creature I've been living with. [*With a harsh laugh.*] God! It wasn't that I haven't guessed how mean and small you are—but I've kept on telling myself that I must be wrong—like a fool!—like a damned fool!

RUTH—You were saying you'd go out on the road if it wasn't for me. Well, you can go, and the sooner the better! I don't care! I'll be glad to get rid of you! The farm'll be better off too. There's been a curse on it ever since you took hold. So go! Go and be a tramp like you've always wanted. It's all you're good for. I can get along without you, don't you worry. I'll get some peace. [*Exulting fiercely.*] And Andy's coming back, don't forget that! He'll attend to things like they should be. He'll show what a man can do! I don't need you. Andy's coming!

ROBERT—[*They are both standing.* ROBERT *grabs her by the shoulders and glares into her eyes.*] What do you mean? [*He shakes her violently.*] What are

you thinking of? What's in your evil mind, you—you—— [*His voice is a harsh shout.*]

RUTH—[*In a defiant scream.*] Yes I do mean it! I'd say it if you was to kill me! I do love Andy. I do! I do! I always loved him. [*Exultantly.*] And he loves me! He loves me! I know he does. He always did! And you know he did, too! So go! Go if you want to!

ROBERT—[*Throwing her away from him. She staggers back against the table—thickly.*] You—you slut! [*He stands glaring at her as she leans back, supporting herself by the table, gasping for breath. A loud frightened whimper sounds from the awakened child in the bedroom. It continues. The man and woman stand looking at one another in horror, the extent of their terrible quarrel suddenly brought home to them. A pause. The noise of a horse and carriage comes from the road before the house. The two, suddenly struck by the same premonition, listen to it breathlessly, as to a sound heard in a dream. It stops. They hear* ANDY'S *voice from the road shouting a long hail—"Ahoy there!"*]

RUTH—[*With a strangled cry of joy.*] Andy! Andy! [*She rushes and grabs the knob of the screen door, about to fling it open.*]

ROBERT—[*In a voice of command that forces obedience.*] Stop! [*He goes to the door and gently pushes the trembling* RUTH *away from it. The child's crying rises to a louder pitch.*] I'll meet Andy. You better go in to Mary, Ruth. [*She looks at him de-*

fiantly for a moment, but there is something in his eyes that makes her turn and walk slowly into the bedroom.]

ANDY'S VOICE—[*In a louder shout.*] Ahoy there, Rob!

ROBERT—[*In an answering shout of forced cheeriness.*] Hello, Andy! [*He opens the door and walks out as*

[*The Curtain Falls*]

ACT TWO

SCENE TWO

SCENE—*The top of a hill on the farm. It is about eleven o'clock the next morning. The day is hot and cloudless. In the distance the sea can be seen.*

The top of the hill slopes downward slightly toward the left. A big boulder stands in the center toward the rear. Further right, a large oak tree. The faint trace of a path leading upward to it from the left foreground can be detected through the bleached, sun-scorched grass.

ROBERT *is discovered sitting on the boulder, his chin resting on his hands, staring out toward the horizon seaward. His face is pale and haggard, his expression one of utter despondency.* MARY *is sitting on the grass near him in the shade, playing with her doll, singing happily to herself. Presently she casts a curious glance at her father, and, propping her doll up against the tree, comes over and clambers to his side.*

MARY—[*Pulling at his hand—solicitously.*] Is Dada sick?

ROBERT—[*Looking at her with a forced smile.*] No, dear. Why?

MARY—Then why don't he play with Mary?

ROBERT—[*Gently.*] No, dear, not today. Dada doesn't feel like playing today.

MARY—[*Protestingly.*] Yes, please, Dada!

ROBERT—No, dear. Dada does feel sick—a little. He's got a bad headache.

MARY—Let Mary see. [*He bends his head. She pats his hair.*] Bad head.

ROBERT—[*Kissing her—with a smile.*] There! It's better now, dear, thank you. [*She cuddles up close against him. There is a pause during which each of them looks out seaward.*]

MARY—[*Pointing toward the sea.*] Is that all wa-wa, Dada?

ROBERT—Yes, dear.

MARY—[*Amazed by the magnitude of this conception.*] Oh-oh! [*She points to the horizon.*] And it all stops there, over farver?

ROBERT—No, it doesn't stop. That line you see is called the horizon. It's where the sea and sky meet. Just beyond that is where the good fairies live. [*Checking himself—with a harsh laugh.*] But you mustn't ever believe in fairies. It's bad luck. And besides, there aren't any good fairies. [MARY *looks up into his face with a puzzled expression.*]

MARY—Then if fairies don't live there, what lives there?

ROBERT—[*Bitterly.*] God knows! Mocking devils,

I've found them. [MARY *frowns in puzzlement, turning this over in her mind. There is a pause. Finally* ROBERT *turns to her tenderly.*] Would you miss Dada very much if he went away?

MARY—Far—far away?

ROBERT—Yes. Far, far away.

MARY—And Mary wouldn't see him, never?

ROBERT—No; but Mary'd forget him very soon, I'm sure.

MARY—[*Tearfully.*] No! No! Dada mustn't go 'way. No, Dada, no!

ROBERT—Don't you like Uncle Andy—the man that came yesterday—not the old man with the white moustache—the other?

MARY—But Dada mustn't go 'way. Mary loves Dada.

ROBERT—[*With fierce determination.*] He won't go away, baby. He was only joking. He couldn't leave his little Mary. [*He presses the child in his arms.*]

MARY—[*With an exclamation of pain.*] Oh! Dada hurts!

ROBERT—I'm sorry, little girl. [*He lifts her down to the grass.*] Go play with Dolly, that's a good girl; and be careful to keep in the shade. [*She reluctantly leaves him and takes up her doll again. A moment later she points down the hill to the left.*]

MARY—Here comes mans, Dada.

ROBERT—[*Looking that way.*] It's your Uncle Andy.

MARY—Will he play wiv me, Dada?

ROBERT—Not now, dear. You mustn't bother him. After a while he will, maybe. [*A moment later* ANDREW *comes up from the left, whistling cheerfully. He has changed but little in appearance, except for the fact that his face has been deeply bronzed by his years in the tropics; but there is a decided change in his manner. The old easy-going good-nature seems to have been partly lost in a breezy, business-like briskness of voice and gesture. There is an authoritative note in his speech as though he were accustomed to give orders and have them obeyed as a matter of course. He is dressed in the simple blue uniform and cap of a merchant ship's officer.*]

ANDREW—Here you are, eh?

ROBERT—Hello, Andy.

ANDREW—[*Going over to* MARY.] And who's this young lady I find you all alone with, eh? Who's this pretty young lady? [*He tickles the laughing, squirming* MARY, *then lifts her up at arm's length over his head.*] Upsy—daisy! [*He sets her down on the ground again.*] And there you are! [*He walks over and sits down on the boulder beside* ROBERT *who moves to one side to make room for him.*] RUTH told me I'd probably find you up top-side here; but I'd have guessed it, anyway. [*He digs his brother in the ribs affectionately.*] Still up to your old tricks, you old beggar! I can remember how you used to come up here to mope and dream in the old days.

ROBERT—[*With a smile.*] I come up here now be-

cause it's the coolest place on the farm. I've given up dreaming.

ANDREW—[*Grinning.*] I don't believe it. You can't have changed that much.

ROBERT—[*Wearily.*] One gets tired of dreaming —when they never come true.

ANDREW—[*Scrutinizing his brother's face.*] You've changed in looks all right. You look all done up, as if you'd been working too hard. Better let up on yourself for a while.

ROBERT—Oh, I'm all right!

ANDREW—Take a fool's advice and go it easy. You remember—your old trouble. You wouldn't want that coming back on you, eh? It pays to keep top-notch in your case.

ROBERT—[*Betraying annoyance.*] Oh, that's all a thing of the past, Andy. Forget it!

ANDREW—Well—a word to the wise does no harm? Don't be touchy about it. [*Slapping his brother on the back.*] You know I mean well, old man, even if I do put my foot in it.

ROBERT—Of course, Andy. I'm not touchy about it. I don't want you to worry about dead things, that's all. I've a headache today, and I expect I do look done up.

ANDREW—Mum's the word, then! [*After a pause —with boyish enthusiasm.*] Say, it sure brings back old times to be up here with you having a chin all by our lonesomes again. I feel great being back home.

ROBERT—It's great for us to have you back.

ANDREW—[*After a pause—meaningly.*] I've been looking over the old place with Ruth. Things don't seem to be——

ROBERT—[*His face flushing—interrupts his brother shortly.*] Never mind the damn farm! There's nothing about it we don't both know by heart. Let's talk about something interesting. This is the first chance I've had to have a word with you alone. To the devil with the farm for the present. They think of nothing else at home. Tell me about your trip. That's what I've been anxious to hear about.

ANDREW—[*With a quick glance of concern at* ROBERT.] I suppose you do get an overdose of the farm at home. [*Indignantly.*] Say, I never realized that Ruth's mother was such an old rip 'till she talked to me this morning. [*With a grin.*] Phew! I pity you, Rob, when she gets on her ear!

ROBERT—She is—difficult sometimes; but one must make allowances. [*Again changing the subject abruptly.*] But this isn't telling me about the trip.

ANDREW—Why, I thought I told you everything in my letters.

ROBERT—[*Smiling.*] Your letters were—sketchy, to say the least.

ANDREW—Oh, I know I'm no author. You needn't be afraid of hurting my feelings. I'd rather go through a typhoon again than write a letter.

ROBERT—[*With eager interest.*] Then you were through a typhoon?

ANDREW—Yes—in the China sea. Had to run before it under bare poles for two days. I thought we were bound down for Davy Jones, sure. Never dreamed waves could get so big or the wind blow so hard. If it hadn't been for Uncle Dick being such a good skipper we'd have gone to the sharks, all of us. As it was we came out minus a main top-mast and had to beat back to Hong-Kong for repairs. But I must have written you all this.

ROBERT—You never mentioned it.

ANDREW—Well, there was so much dirty work getting things ship-shape again I must have forgotten about it.

ROBERT—[*Looking at* ANDREW—*marvelling.*] Forget a typhoon? [*With a trace of scorn.*] You're a strange combination, Andy. And is what you've told me all you remember about it?

ANDREW—Oh, I could give you your bellyful of details if I wanted to turn loose on you; but they're not the kind of things to fit in with your pretty notions of life on the ocean wave, I'll give you that straight.

ROBERT—[*Earnestly.*] Tell me. I'd like to hear them—honestly!

ANDREW—What's the use? They'd make a man want to live in the middle of America without even a river in a hundred miles of him so he'd feel safe. It was rotten, that's what it was! Talk about work! I was wishin' the ship'd sink and give me a rest, I was so dog tired toward the finish. We didn't get a warm

thing to eat for nearly two weeks. There was enough China Sea in the galley to float the stove, and the fo' c's'tle was flooded, too. And you couldn't sleep a wink. No place on the darned old tub stayed still long enough for you to lie on it. And every one was soaked to the skin all the time, with green seas boiling over the deck keeping you busy jumping for the ratlines to keep from being washed over. Oh, it was all-wool-and-a-yard-wide-Hell, I'll tell you. You ought to have been there. I remember thinking about you at the worst of it when you couldn't force a breath out against the wind, and saying to myself: 'This'd cure Rob of them ideas of his about the beautiful sea, if he could see it.' And it would have too, you bet! [*He nods emphatically.*]

ROBERT—And you don't see any romance in that?

ANDREW—Romance be blowed! It was hell! [*As an afterthought.*] Oh, I was forgetting! One of the men *was* washed overboard—a Norwegian—Ollie we called him. [*With a grin of sarcasm.*] I suppose that's romance, eh? Well, it might be for a fish, but not for me, old man!

ROBERT—[*Dryly.*] The sea doesn't seem to have impressed you very favorably.

ANDREW—I should say it didn't! It's a dog's life. You work like the devil and put up with all kinds of hardships—for what? For a rotten wage you'd be ashamed to take on shore.

ROBERT—Then you're not going to—follow it up?

ANDREW—Not me! I'm through! I'll never set

foot on a ship again if I can help it—except to carry me some place I can't get to by train. No. I've had enough. Dry land is the only place for me.

ROBERT—But you studied to become an officer!

ANDREW—Had to do something or I'd gone mad. The days were like years. Nothing to look at but sea and sky. No place to go. A regular prison. [*He laughs.*] And as for the East you used to rave about —well, you ought to see it, and *smell* it! And the Chinks and Japs and Hindus and the rest of them—you can have them! One walk down one of their filthy narrow streets with the tropic sun beating on it would sicken you for life with the "wonder and mystery" you used to dream of. I can say one thing for it though—it certainly has the stink market cornered.

ROBERT—[*Shrinking from his brother with a glance of aversion.*] So all you found in the East was a stench?

ANDREW—*A* stench! Ten thousand of them! That and the damned fever! You can have the tropics, old man. I never want to see them again. At that, there's lots of money to be made down there—for a white man. The natives are too lazy to work, that's the only trouble.

ROBERT—But you did like some of the places, judging from your letters—Sydney, Buenos Aires——

ANDREW—Yes, Sydney's a good town. [*Enthusiastically.*] But Buenos Aires—there's the place for you. Argentine's a country where a fellow has a

chance to make good. You're right I liked it. And I'll tell you, Rob, that's right where I'm going just as soon as I've seen you folks a while and can get a ship. I don't intend to pay for my passage now I can get a berth as second officer, and I'll jump the ship when I get there. I'll need every cent of the wages Uncle's paid me to get a start at something in B. A.

ROBERT—[*Staring at his brother—slowly.*] So you're not going to stay on the farm?

ANDREW—Why sure not! Did you think I was? There wouldn't be any sense. One of us is enough to run this little place.

ROBERT—I suppose it does seem small to you now.

ANDREW—[*Not noticing the sarcasm in* ROBERT's *tone.*] You've no idea, Rob, what a splendid place Argentine is. I went around Buenos Aires quite a lot and got to know people—English speaking people, of course. The town is full of them. It's foreign capital that's developed the country, you know. I had a letter from a marine insurance chap that I'd made friends with in Hong-Kong to his brother, who's in the grain business in Buenos Aires. He took quite a fancy to me, and what's more important, he offered me a job if I'd come back there. I'd have taken it on the spot, only I couldn't leave Uncle Dick in the lurch, and I'd promised you folks to come home. But I'm going back there very soon, you bet, and then you watch me get on! [*He slaps* ROBERT *on the back.*] But don't you think it's a big chance, Rob?

ROBERT—It's fine—for you, Andy.

ANDREW—We call this a farm—but you ought to hear about the farms down there—ten square miles where we've got an acre. It's a new country where big things are opening up—and I want to get in on something big before I die. That job I'm offered'll furnish the wedge. I'm no fool when it comes to farming, and I know something about grain. I've been reading up a lot on it, too, lately. [*He notices* ROBERT's *absent-minded expression and laughs.*] Wake up, you old poetry book worm, you! I know my talking about business makes you want to choke me, doesn't it?

ROBERT—[*With an embarrassed smile.*] No, Andy, I—I just happened to think of something else. [*Frowning.*] There've been lots of times lately that I've wished I had some of your faculty for business.

ANDREW—[*Soberly.*] There's something I want to talk about, Rob,—the farm. You don't mind, do you?

ROBERT—No.

ANDREW—I walked over it this morning with Ruth —and she told me about things—— [*Evasively.*] —the hard luck you'd had and how things stood at present—and about your thinking of raising a mortgage.

ROBERT—[*Bitterly.*] It's all true I guess, and probably worse than she told you.

ANDREW—I could see the place had run down; but you mustn't blame yourself. When luck's against anyone——

ROBERT—Don't, Andy! It *is* my fault—my inability. You know it as well as I do. The best I've ever done was to make ends meet, and this year I can't do that without the mortgage.

ANDREW—[*After a pause.*] You mustn't raise the mortgage, Rob. I've got over a thousand saved, and you can have that.

ROBERT—[*Firmly.*] No. You need that for your start in Buenos Aires.

ANDREW—I don't. I can——

ROBERT—[*Determinedly.*] No, Andy! Once and for all, no! I won't hear of it!

ANDREW—[*Protestingly.*] You obstinate old son of a gun! [*There is a pause.*] Well, I'll do the best I can while I'm here. I'll get a real man to superintend things for you—if he can be got. That'll relieve you some. If he gets results, you can afford to pay him.

ROBERT—Oh, everything'll be on a sound footing after harvest. Don't worry about it.

ANDREW—[*Doubtfully.*] Maybe. The prospects don't look so bad.

ROBERT—And then I can pay the mortgage off again. It's just to tide over.

ANDREW—[*After a pause.*] I wish you'd let me help, Rob.

ROBERT—[*With a tone of finality.*] No. Please don't suggest it any more. My mind's made up on that point.

ANDREW—[*Slapping his brother on the back—*

with forced joviality.] Well, anyway, you've got to promise to let me step in when I've made my pile; and I'll make it down there, I'm certain; and it won't take me long, either.

ROBERT—I've no doubt you will with your determination.

ANDREW—I'll be able to pay off all the mortgages you can raise! Still, a mortgage isn't such a bad thing at that—it makes a place heaps easier to sell—and you may want to cut loose from this farm some day—come down and join me in Buenos Aires, that's the ticket.

ROBERT—If I had only myself to consider——

ANDREW—Yes, I suppose they wouldn't want to come. [*After a pause.*] It's too bad Pa couldn't have lived to see things through. [*With feeling.*] It cut me up a lot—hearing he was dead. Tell me about it. You didn't say much in your letter.

ROBERT—[*Evasively.*] He's at peace, Andy. It'll only make you feel bad to talk of it.

ANDREW—He never—softened up, did he—about me, I mean?

ROBERT—He never understood, that's a kinder way of putting it. He does now.

ANDREW—[*After a pause.*] You've forgotten all about what—caused me to go, haven't you Rob? [ROBERT *nods but keeps his face averted.*] I was a slushier damn fool in those days than you were. But it was an act of Providence I did go. It opened my eyes to how I'd been fooling myself. Why, I'd for-

gotten all about—that—before I'd been at sea six months.

ROBERT—[*Turns and looks into* ANDREW'S *eyes searchingly.*] You're speaking of—Ruth?

ANDREW—[*Confused.*] Yes. I didn't want you to get false notions in your head, or I wouldn't say anything. [*Looking* ROBERT *squarely in the eyes.*] I'm telling you the truth when I say I'd forgotten long ago. It don't sound well for me, getting over things so easy, but I guess it never really amounted to more than a kid idea I was letting rule me. I'm certain now I never was in love—I was getting fun out of thinking I was—and being a hero to myself. [*He heaves a great sigh of relief.*] There! Gosh, I'm glad that's off my chest. I've been feeling sort of awkward ever since I've been home, thinking of what you two might think. [*A trace of appeal in his voice.*] You've got it all straight now, haven't you, Rob?

ROBERT—[*In a low voice.*] Yes, Andy.

ANDREW—And I'll tell Ruth, too, if I can get up the nerve. She must feel kind of funny having me round—after what used to be—and not knowing how I feel about it.

ROBERT—[*Slowly.*] Perhaps—for her sake—you'd better not tell her.

ANDREW—For her sake? Oh, you mean she wouldn't want to be reminded of my foolishness? Still, I think it'd be worse if——

ROBERT—[*Breaking out—in an agonized voice.*]

Do as you please, Andy; but for God's sake, let's not talk about it! [*There is a pause.* ANDREW *stares at* ROBERT *in hurt stupefaction.* ROBERT *continues after a moment in a voice which he vainly attempts to keep calm.*] Excuse me, Andy. This rotten headache has my nerves shot to pieces.

ANDREW—[*Mumbling.*] It's all right, Rob—long as you're not sore at me.

ROBERT—Where did Uncle Dick disappear to this morning?

ANDREW—He went down to the port to see to things on the *Sunda.* He said he didn't know exactly when he'd be back. I'll have to go down and tend to the ship when he comes. That's why I dressed up in these togs.

MARY—[*Pointing down the hill to the left.*] See Dada! Mama! Mama! [*She jumps to her feet and starts to run down the path.*]

ANDREW—[*Standing and looking down.*] Yes, here comes Ruth. Must be looking for you, I guess. [*Jumping forward and stopping* MARY.] Hey up! You mustn't run down hill like that, little girl. You'll take a bad fall, don't you know it?

ROBERT—Stay here and wait for your mother, Mary.

MARY—[*Struggling to her feet.*] No! No! Mama! Dada!

ANDREW—Here she is! [RUTH *appears at left. She is dressed in white, shows she has been fixing up. She looks pretty, flushed and full of life.*]

MARY—[*Running to her mother.*] Mama!

RUTH—[*Kissing her.*] Hello, dear! [*She walks toward the rock and addresses* ROBERT *coldly.*] Jake wants to see you about something. He finished working where he was. He's waiting for you at the road.

ROBERT—[*Getting up—wearily.*] I'll go down right away. [*As he looks at* RUTH, *noting her changed appearance, his face darkens with pain.*]

RUTH—And take Mary with you, please. [*To* MARY.] Go with Dada, that's a good girl. Grandma has your dinner most ready for you.

ROBERT—[*Shortly.*] Come, Mary!

MARY—[*Taking his hand and dancing happily beside him.*] Dada! Dada! [*They go down the hill to the left.* RUTH *looks after them for a moment, frowning—then turns to* ANDY *with a smile.*] I'm going to sit down. Come on, Andy. It'll be like old times. [*She jumps lightly to the top of the rock and sits down.*] It's so fine and cool up here after the house.

ANDREW—[*Half-sitting on the side of the boulder.*] Yes. It's great.

RUTH—I've taken a holiday in honor of your arrival—from work in the kitchen. [*Laughing excitedly.*] I feel so free I'd like to have wings and fly over the sea. You're a man. You can't know how awful and stupid it is—cooking and washing dishes all the time.

ANDREW—[*Making a wry face.*] I can guess.

RUTH—Besides, your mother just insisted on get-

ting your first dinner to home, she's that happy at having you back. You'd think I was planning to poison you the flurried way she shooed me out of the kitchen.

ANDREW—That's just like Ma, bless her!

RUTH—She's missed you terrible. We all have. And you can't deny the farm has, after what I showed you and told you when we was looking over the place this morning.

ANDREW—[*With a frown.*] Things are run down, that's a fact! It's too darn hard on poor old Rob.

RUTH—[*Scornfully.*] It's his own fault. He never takes any interest in things.

ANDREW—[*Reprovingly.*] You can't blame him. He wasn't born for it; but I know he's done his best for your sake and the old folks and the little girl.

RUTH—[*Indifferently.*] Yes, I suppose he has. [*Gaily.*] But thank the Lord, all those days are over now. The "hard luck" Rob's always blaming won't last long when you take hold, Andy. All the farm's ever needed was someone with the knack of looking ahead and preparing for what's going to happen.

ANDREW—Yes, Rob hasn't got that. He's frank to own up to that himself. I'm going to try and hire a good man for him—an experienced farmer—to work the place on a salary and percentage. That'll take it off of Rob's hands, and he needn't be worrying himself to death any more. He looks all worn out, Ruth. He ought to be careful.

RUTH—[*Absent-mindedly.*] Yes, I s'pose. [*Her*

mind is filled with premonitions by the first part of his statement.]

ANDREW—It would be a good idea if Rob could pull out of here—get a job in town on a newspaper, or something connected with writing—and this plan of mine'd give him a chance.

RUTH—[*Vaguely.*] He's always wanted to get away. [*Suspiciously.*] Why do you want to hire a man to oversee things? Seems as if now that you're back it wouldn't be needful.

ANDREW—Oh, of course I'll attend to everything while I'm here. I mean after I'm gone.

RUTH—[*As if she couldn't believe her ears.*] Gone!

ANDREW—Yes. When I leave for the Argentine again.

RUTH—[*Aghast.*] You're going away to sea again!

ANDREW—Not to sea, no; I'm through with the sea for good as a job. I'm going down to Buenos Aires to get in the grain business.

RUTH—But—that's way far off—isn't it?

ANDREW—[*Easily.*] Six thousand miles more or less. It's quite a trip. [*With enthusiasm.*] I've got a peach of a chance down there, Ruth. Ask Rob if I haven't. I've just been telling him all about it. I won't bother you by repeating. Rob can tell you.

RUTH—[*A flush of anger coming over her face.*] And didn't he try to stop you from going?

ANDREW—[*In surprise.*] No, of course not. Why?

RUTH—[*Slowly and vindictively.*] That's just like him—not to.

ANDREW—[*Resentfully.*] Rob's too good a chum to try and stop me when he knows I'm set on a thing. And he could see just as soon's I told him what a good chance it was. You ask him about it.

RUTH—[*Dazedly.*] And you're bound on going?

ANDREW—Sure thing. Oh, I don't mean right off. I'll have to wait for a ship sailing there for quite a while, likely. Anyway, I want to stay to home and visit with you folks a spell before I go.

RUTH—[*Dumbly.*] I s'pose. [*With sudden anguish.*] Oh, Andy, you can't go! You can't. Why we've all thought—we've all been hoping and praying you was coming home to stay, to settle down on the farm and see to things. You mustn't go! Think of how your Ma'll take on if you go—and how the farm'll be ruined if you leave it to Rob to look after. You can see that.

ANDREW—[*Frowning.*] Rob hasn't done so bad. When I get a man to direct things the farm'll be safe enough.

RUTH—[*Insistently.*] But your Ma—think of her.

ANDREW—She's used to me being away. She won't object when she knows it's best for her and all of us for me to go. You ask Rob. In a couple of years down there I'll make my pile, see if I don't; and then I'll come back and settle down and turn this farm to the crackiest place in the whole state. In the mean-

time, I can help you both from down there. [*Earnestly.*] I tell you, Ruth, I'm going to make good right from the minute I land, if working hard and a determination to get on can do it; and I *know* they can! I'll have money and lots of it before long, and none of you'll have to worry about this pesky little farm any more. [*Excitedly—in a rather boastful tone.*] I tell you, I feel ripe for bigger things than settling down here. The trip did that for me, anyway. It showed me the world in a larger proposition than ever I thought it was in the old days. I couldn't be content any more stuck here like a fly in molasses. There ain't enough to do. It all seems trifling, somehow. You ought to be able to understand what I feel.

RUTH—[*Dully.*] Yes—I s'pose I ought.

ANDREW—I felt sure you'd see; and wait till Rob tells you about——

RUTH—[*A dim suspicion forming in her mind—interrupting him.*] What did he tell you—about me?

ANDREW—Tell? About you? Why, nothing.

RUTH—[*Staring at him intensely.*] Are you telling me the truth, Andy Mayo? Didn't he say—I—— [*She stops confusedly.*]

ANDREW—[*Surprised.*] No, he didn't mention you, I can remember. Why? What made you think he did?

RUTH—[*Wringing her hands.*] Oh, I wish I could tell if you're lying or not!

ANDREW—[*Indignantly.*] What're you talking

about? I didn't used to lie to you, did I? And what in the name of God is there to lie for?

RUTH—[*Still unconvinced.*] Are you sure—will you swear—it isn't the reason—— [*She lowers her eyes and half turns away from him.*] The same reason that made you go last time that's driving you away again? 'Cause if it is—I was going to say—you mustn't go—on that account. [*Her voice sinks to a tremulous, tender whisper as she finishes.*]

ANDREW—[*Confused—forces a laugh.*] Oh, is *that* what you're driving at? Well, you needn't worry about that no more—— [*Soberly.*] I don't blame you, Ruth, feeling embarrassed having me around again, after the way I played the dumb fool about going away last time. You'll have to put it down to me just being young and foolish and not responsible for my actions—and forgive me and forget it. Will you?

RUTH—[*In anguish buries her face in her hands.*] Oh, Andy!

ANDREW—[*Misunderstanding.*] I know I oughtn't to talk about such foolishness to you. Still I figure it's better to get it out of my system so's we three can be together samé's years ago, and not be worried thinking one of us might have the wrong notion. No, don't you fret about me having any such reason for going this time. I'm not a calf any more. Why honest, Ruth, before the ship got to Hong Kong I'd near forgot all that part of it. All I remembered was

the awful scrap I'd had with Pa—and I was darned cut up about that.

RUTH—Andy! Please! Don't!

ANDREW—Let me finish now that I've started. It'll help clear things up. I don't want you to think once a fool always a fool, and be upset all the time I'm here on my fool account. I want you to believe I put all that silly nonsense back of me a long time ago—and now—it seems—well—as if you'd always been my sister, that's what, Ruth.

RUTH—[*At the end of her enaurance—laughing hysterically.*] For God's sake, Andy—won't you please stop talking! [*She again hides her face in her hands, her bowed shoulders trembling.*]

ANDREW—[*Ruefully.*] Seem's if I put my foot in it whenever I open my mouth today. Rob shut me up with almost them same words when I tried speaking to him about it.

RUTH—[*Fiercely.*] You told him—what you've told me?

ANDREW—[*Astounded.*] Why sure! Why not?

RUTH—[*Shuddering.*] Oh, my God!

ANDREW—[*Alarmed.*] Why? Shouldn't I have?

RUTH—[*Hysterically.*] Oh, I don't care what you do! I don't care! Leave me alone! [ANDREW *gets up and walks down the hill to the left, embarrassed, hurt, and greatly puzzled by her behavior.*]

ANDREW—[*After a pause—pointing down the hill.*] Hello! Here they come back—and the Captain's with them. How'd he come to get back so soon,

I wonder? That means I've got to hustle down to the port and get on board. Rob's got the baby with him. [*He comes back to the boulder.* RUTH *keeps her face averted from him.*] Gosh, I never saw a father so tied up in a kid as Rob is! He just watches every move she makes. And I don't blame him. You both got a right to feel proud of her. She's surely a little winner. [*He glances at* RUTH *to see if this very obvious attempt to get back in her good graces is having any effect.*] I can see the likeness to Rob standing out all over her, can't you? But there's no denying she's your young one, either. There's something about her eyes——

RUTH—[*Piteously.*] Oh, Andy, I've a headache! I don't want to talk! Leave me alone, won't you please?

ANDREW—[*Stands staring at her for a moment—then walks away saying in a hurt tone.*] Everybody hereabouts seems to be on edge today. I begin to feel as if I'm not wanted around. [*He stands near the path, left, kicking at the grass with the toe of his shoe. A moment later* CAPTAIN DICK SCOTT *enters, followed by* ROBERT *carrying* MARY. *The* CAPTAIN *seems scarcely to have changed at all from the jovial, booming person he was three years before. He wears a uniform similar to* ANDREW'S. *He is puffing and breathless from his climb and mops wildly at his perspiring countenance.* ROBERT *casts a quick glance at* ANDREW, *noticing the latter's discomfited look, and then turns his eyes on* RUTH *who, at their approach,*

has moved so her back is toward them, her chin resting on her hands as she stares out seaward.]

MARY—Mama! Mama! [ROBERT *puts her down and she runs to her mother.* RUTH *turns and grabs her up in her arms with a sudden fierce tenderness, quickly turning away again from the others. During the following scene she keeps* MARY *in her arms.*]

SCOTT—[*Wheezily.*] Phew! I got great news for you, Andy. Let me get my wind first. Phew! God A'mighty, mountin' this damned hill is worser'n goin' aloft to the skys'l yard in a blow. I got to lay to a while. [*He sits down on the grass, mopping his face.*]

ANDREW—I didn't look for you this soon, Uncle.

SCOTT—I didn't figger it, neither; but I run across a bit o' news down to the Seamen's Home made me 'bout ship and set all sail back here to find you.

ANDREW—[*Eagerly.*] What is it, Uncle?

SCOTT—Passin' by the Home I thought I'd drop in an' let 'em know I'd be lackin' a mate next trip count o' your leavin'. Their man in charge o' the shippin' asked after you 'special curious. 'Do you think he'd consider a berth as Second on a steamer, Captain?' he asks. I was goin' to say no when I thinks o' you wantin' to get back down south to the Plate agen; so I asks him: 'What is she and where's she bound?' 'She's the *El Paso*, a brand new tramp,' he says, 'and she's bound for Buenos Aires.'

ANDREW—[*His eyes lighting up—excitedly.*] Gosh, that is luck! When does she sail?

SCOTT—Tomorrow mornin'. I didn't know if you'd want to ship away agen so quick an' I told him so. 'Tell him I'll hold the berth open for him until late this afternoon,' he says. So I said I'd tell you an' I catches the first car back to town. So there you be, an' you can make your own choice.

ANDREW—I'd like to take it. There may not be another ship for Buenos Aires with a vacancy in months. [*His eyes roving from* ROBERT *to* RUTH *and back again—uncertainly.*] Still—damn it all—tomorrow morning *is* soon. I wish she wasn't leaving for a week or so. That'd give me a chance—it seems hard to go right away again when I've just got home. And yet it's a chance in a thousand—— [*Appealing to* ROBERT.] What do you think, Rob? What would you do?

ROBERT—[*Forcing a smile.*] He who hesitates, you know. [*Frowning.*] It's a piece of good luck thrown in your way—and—from what you've told me of your plans—I think you owe it to yourself to jump at it. But don't ask me to decide for you.

RUTH—[*Turning to look at* ANDREW—*in a tone of fierce resentment.*] Yes go, Andy! [*She turns quickly away again. There is a moment of embarrassed silence.*]

ANDREW—[*Thoughtfully.*] Yes, I guess I will. It'll be the best thing for all of us in the end, don't you think so, Rob? [ROBERT *nods but remains silent.*]

SCOTT—[*Getting to his feet.*] Then, that's settled.

ANDREW—[*Now that he has definitely made a decision his voice rings with hopeful strength and energy.*] Yes, I'll take the berth. The sooner I go the sooner I'll be back, that's a certainty; and I won't come back with empty hands next time. You bet I won't!

SCOTT—You ain't got so much time, Andy. To make sure you'd best leave here soon's you kin. You can't put too much trust in them fellers. I got to get right back aboard. You'd best come with me.

ANDREW—I'll go to the house and repack my bag right away.

ROBERT—[*Quietly.*] You'll both be here for dinner, won't you?

ANDREW—[*Worriedly.*] I don't know. Will there be time? What time is it now, I wonder?

ROBERT—[*Reproachfully.*] Ma's been getting dinner especially for you, Andy.

ANDREW—[*Flushing—shamefacedly.*] Hell! And I was forgetting! I'm a damn fool. Of course I'll stay for dinner if I missed every damned ship in the world. [*He turns to the* CAPTAIN—*briskly.*] Come on, Uncle. Walk down with me to the house and you can tell me more about this berth on the way. I've got to pack before dinner. [*He and the* CAPTAIN *start down to the left.* ANDREW *calls back over his shoulder.*] You're coming soon, aren't you, Rob?

ROBERT—Yes. I'll be right down. [ANDREW *and*

the CAPTAIN *leave.* RUTH *puts* MARY *on the ground and hides her face in her hands. Her shoulders shake as if she were sobbing.* ROBERT *stares at her with a grim, somber expression.* MARY *walks backward toward* ROBERT, *her wondering eyes fixed on her mother.*]

MARY—[*Her voice vaguely frightened, taking her father's hand.*] Dada, Mama's cryin', Dada.

ROBERT—[*Bending down and stroking her hair—in a voice he endeavors to keep from being harsh.*] No, she isn't, little girl. The sun hurts her eyes, that's all. Aren't you beginning to feel hungry, Mary?

MARY—[*Decidedly.*] Yes, Dada.

ROBERT—[*Meaningly.*] It must be your dinner time now.

RUTH—[*In a muffled voice.*] I'm coming, Mary. [*She wipes her eyes quickly and, without looking at* ROBERT, *comes and takes* MARY'S *hand—in a dead voice.*] Come on and I'll get your dinner for you. [*She walks out left, her eyes fixed on the ground, the skipping* MARY *tugging at her hand.* ROBERT *waits a moment for them to get ahead and then slowly follows as*

[*The Curtain Falls*]

BEYOND THE HORIZON

ACT III

ACT THREE

SCENE ONE

SCENE—*Same as Act Two, Scene One—The sitting room of the farm house about six o'clock in the morning of a day toward the end of October five years later. It is not yet dawn, but as the action progresses the darkness outside the windows gradually fades to grey.*

The room, seen by the light of the shadeless oil lamp with a smoky chimney which stands on the table, presents an appearance of decay, of dissolution. The curtains at the windows are torn and dirty and one of them is missing. The closed desk is grey with accumulated dust as if it had not been used in years. Blotches of dampness disfigure the wall paper. Threadbare trails, leading to the kitchen and outer doors, show in the faded carpet. The top of the coverless table is stained with the imprints of hot dishes and spilt food. The rung of one rocker has been clumsily mended with a piece of plain board. A brown coating of rust covers the unblacked stove. A pile of wood is stacked up carelessly against the wall by the stove.

The whole atmosphere of the room, contrasted with that of former years, is one of an habitual poverty too hopelessly resigned to be any longer ashamed or even conscious of itself.

At the rise of the curtain RUTH *is discovered sitting by the stove, with hands outstretched to the warmth as if the air in the room were damp and cold. A heavy shawl is wrapped about her shoulders, half-concealing her dress of deep mourning. She has aged horribly. Her pale, deeply lined face has the stony lack of expression of one to whom nothing more can ever happen, whose capacity for emotion has been exhausted. When she speaks her voice is without timbre, low and monotonous. The negligent disorder of her dress, the slovenly arrangement of her hair, now streaked with grey, her muddied shoes run down at the heel, give full evidence of the apathy in which she lives.*

Her mother is asleep in her wheel chair beside the stove toward the rear, wrapped up in a blanket.

There is a sound from the open bedroom door in the rear as if someone were getting out of bed. RUTH *turns in that direction with a look of dull annoyance. A moment later* ROBERT *appears in the doorway, leaning weakly against it for support. His hair is long and unkempt, his face and body emaciated. There are bright patches of crimson over his cheek bones and his eyes are*

burning with fever. He is dressed in corduroy pants, a flannel shirt, and wears worn carpet slippers on his bare feet.

RUTH—[*Dully.*] S-s-s-h-h! Ma's asleep.

ROBERT—[*Speaking with an effort.*] I won't wake her. [*He walks weakly to a rocker by the side of the table and sinks down in it exhausted.*]

RUTH—[*Staring at the stove.*] You better come near the fire where it's warm.

ROBERT—No. I'm burning up now.

RUTH—That's the fever. You know the doctor told you not to get up and move round.

ROBERT—[*Irritably.*] That old fossil! He doesn't know anything. Go to bed and stay there—that's his only prescription.

RUTH—[*Indifferently.*] How are you feeling now?

ROBERT—[*Buoyantly.*] Better! Much better than I've felt in ages. Really I'm quite healthy now—only very weak. It's the turning point, I guess. From now on I'll pick up so quick I'll surprise you—and no thanks to that old fool of a country quack, either.

RUTH—He's always tended to us.

ROBERT—Always helped us to die, you mean! He "tended" to Pa and Ma and—(his voice breaks)—and to—Mary.

RUTH—[*Dully.*] He did the best he knew, I s'pose.

[*After a pause.*] Well, Andy's bringing a specialist with him when he comes. That ought to suit you.

ROBERT—[*Bitterly.*] Is that why you're waiting up all night?

RUTH—Yes.

ROBERT—For Andy?

RUTH—[*Without a trace of feeling.*] Somebody had got to, when he's bringing that doctor with him. You can't tell when he might get here if he's coming from the port in an auto like he telegraphed us. And besides it's only right for someone to meet him after he's been gone five years.

ROBERT—[*With bitter mockery.*] Five years! It's a long time.

RUTH—Yes.

ROBERT—[*Meaningly.*] To *wait!*

RUTH—[*Indifferently.*] It's past now.

ROBERT—Yes, it's past. [*After a pause.*] Have you got his two telegrams with you? [RUTH *nods.*] Let me see them, will you? My head was so full of fever when they came I couldn't make head or tail to them. [*Hastily.*] But I'm feeling fine now. Let me read them again. [RUTH *takes them from the bosom of her dress and hands them to him.*]

RUTH—Here. The first one's on top.

ROBERT—[*Opening it.*] New York. "Just landed from steamer. Have important business to wind up here. Will be home as soon as deal is completed." [*He smiles bitterly.*] Business first was always Andy's motto. [*He reads.*] "Hope you are all well. Andy."

[*He repeats ironically.*] "Hope you are all well!"

RUTH—[*Dully.*] He couldn't know you'd been took sick till I answered that and told him.

ROBERT—[*Contritely.*] Of course he couldn't. You're right. I'm a fool. I'm touchy about nothing lately. Just what did you say in your reply? I forget.

RUTH—[*Inconsequentially.*] I had to send it collect. [ROBERT *frowns.*] I wrote you were pretty low and for him to hurry up here.

ROBERT—[*Irritably.*] He'll think I'm dying or some such foolishness. What an idiotic exaggeration! What did you say was the matter with me? Did you mention that?

RUTH—I wrote you had lung trouble—just those two words. [*Dully.*] The boy said it wouldn't cost any more for two words.

ROBERT—[*Flying into a petty temper.*] You *are* a fool! How often have I explained to you that it's *pleurisy* is the matter with me. You can't seem to get it in your head that the pleura is outside the lungs, not in them!

RUTH—[*Callously.*] I only wrote what Doctor Smith told me.

ROBERT—[*Angrily.*] He's a damned ignoramus!

RUTH—[*Dully.*] Makes no difference. I had to tell Andy something, didn't I?

ROBERT—[*After a pause, opening the other telegram.*] He sent this last evening. Let's see. [*He reads.*] "Leave for home on midnight train. Just

received your wire. Am bringing specialist to see Rob. Will motor to farm from Port." [*He calculates.*] The midnight gets in the Port about four-thirty, I think, or five. It should take a car an hour or more to get here. What time is it now?

RUTH—Round six, must be.

ROBERT—He ought to be here soon. I'm glad he's bringing a doctor who knows something. I'm tired of being at the mercy of that cheap old quack. A specialist will tell you in a second that there's nothing the matter with my lungs.

RUTH—[*Stolidly.*] You've been coughing an awful lot lately.

ROBERT—[*Irritably.*] What nonsense! For God's sake, haven't you ever had a bad cold yourself? [RUTH *stares at the stove in silence.* ROBERT *fidgets in his chair. There is a pause. Finally* ROBERT'S *eyes are fixed on the sleeping* MRS. ATKINS.] Your mother is lucky to be able to sleep so soundly.

RUTH—Ma's tired. She's been sitting up with me most of the night.

ROBERT—[*Mockingly.*] Is she waiting for Andy, too? [*There is a pause.* ROBERT *sighs.*] I couldn't get to sleep to save my soul. I counted ten million sheep if I counted one. No use! My brain kept pounding out thoughts as if its life depended on it. I gave up trying finally and just laid there in the dark thinking. [*He pauses, then continues in a tone of tender sympathy.*] I was thinking about you,

Ruth—of how hard these last years must have been for you. [*Appealingly.*] I'm sorry, Ruth.

Ruth—[*In a dead voice.*] I don't know. They're past now. They were hard on all of us.

Robert—Yes; on all of us but Andy. [*With a flash of sick jealousy.*] Andy's made a big success of himself—the kind he wanted. He's got lots of money and, I suppose, a reputation for being a sharp business man. [*Mockingly.*] What else is there in life to wish for, eh, Ruth? And now he's coming home to let us admire his greatness. [*Frowning—irritably.*] What does it matter? What am I talking about? My brain must be sick, too. [*After a pause.*] Yes, these years have been terrible for both of us. [*His voice is lowered to a trembling whisper.*] Especially the last eight months since Mary—died. [*He forces back a sob with a convulsive shudder—then breaks out in a passionate agony.*] Our last hope of happiness! I could curse God from the bottom of my soul—if there was a God! [*He is racked by a violent fit of coughing and hurriedly puts his handkerchief to his lips.*]

Ruth—[*Without looking at him.*] Mary's better off—being dead.

Robert—[*Gloomily.*] We'd all be better off for that matter. [*With sudden exasperation.*] You tell that mother of yours she's got to stop saying that Mary's death was due to a weak constitution inherited from me. [*On the verge of tears of weakness.*] It's got to stop, I tell you!

RUTH—[*Sullenly.*] She's only saying what Doctor Smith said.

ROBERT—[*Fiercely.*] He's an old ass, and I'll tell him if——

RUTH—[*Sharply.*] S-h-h! You'll wake her; and then she'll nag at me—not you.

ROBERT—[*Coughs and lies back in his chair weakly—a pause.*] It's all because your mother's down on me for not begging Andy for help when things got worse here.

RUTH—[*Resentfully.*] You might have. He's got plenty, if what he says is true.

ROBERT—How can *you* of all people think of taking money from *him?*

RUTH—[*Dully.*] I don't see the harm. He's your own brother.

ROBERT—[*Shrugging his shoulders.*] What's the use of talking to you? Well, *I* couldn't. [*Proudly.*] And I've managed to keep things going, thank God. You can't deny that without help I've succeeded in—— [*He breaks off with a bitter laugh.*] My God, what am I boasting of? Debts to this one and that, taxes, interest unpaid! I'm a fool! [*He lies back in his chair closing his eyes for a moment, then speaks in a low voice.*] I'll be frank, Ruth. I've been an utter failure, and I've dragged you with me. I couldn't blame you in all justice—for hating me.

RUTH—[*Without feeling.*] I don't hate you. It's been my fault too, I s'pose.

ROBERT—No. You couldn't help loving—Andy.

RUTH—[*Dully.*] I don't love anyone.

ROBERT—[*Waving her remark aside.*] You needn't deny it. It doesn't matter. [*After a pause—with a tender smile.*] Do you know Ruth, what I've been dreaming back there in the dark? [*With a short laugh.*] It may sound silly of me but—I was planning our future when I get well. [*He looks at her with appealing eyes as if afraid she will sneer at him. Her expression does not change. She stares at the stove. His voice takes on a note of eagerness.*] After all, why shouldn't we have a future? We're young yet. If we can only shake off the curse of this farm! It's the farm that's ruined our lives, damn it! And now that Andy's coming back—I'm going to sink my foolish pride, Ruth! I'll borrow the money from him to give us a good start in the city. We'll go where people live instead of stagnating, and start all over again. [*Confidently.*] I won't be the failure there that I've been here, Ruth. You won't need to be ashamed of me there. I'll prove to you the reading I've done can be put to some use. [*Vaguely.*] I'll write, or something of that sort. I've always wanted to write. [*Pleadingly.*] You'll want to do that, won't you, Ruth?

RUTH—[*Dully.*] There's Ma.

ROBERT—She can come with us.

RUTH—She wouldn't.

ROBERT—[*Angrily.*] So that's your answer! [*He trembles with violent passion. His voice is so strange*

that RUTH *turns to look at him in alarm.*] You're lying, Ruth! Your mother's just an excuse. You want to stay here. You think that because Andy's coming back that—— [*He chokes and has an attack of coughing.*]

RUTH—[*Getting up—in a frightened voice.*] What's the matter? [*She goes to him.*] I'll go with you, Rob. I don't care for Andy like you think. Stop that coughing for goodness sake! It's awful bad for you. [*She soothes him in dull tones.*] I'll go with you to the city—soon's you're well again. Honest I will, Rob, I promise! [ROB *lies back and closes his eyes. She stands looking down at him anxiously.*] Do you feel better now?

ROBERT—Yes. [RUTH *goes back to her chair. After a pause he opens his eyes and sits up in his chair. His face is flushed and happy.*] Then you *will* go, Ruth?

RUTH—Yes.

ROBERT—[*Excitedly.*] We'll make a new start, Ruth—just you and I. Life owes us some happiness after what we've been through. [*Vehemently.*] It must! Otherwise our suffering would be meaningless—and that is unthinkable.

RUTH—[*Worried by his excitement.*] Yes, yes, of course, Rob, but you mustn't——

ROBERT—Oh, don't be afraid. I feel completely well, really I do—now that I can hope again. Oh if you knew how glorious it feels to have something to look forward to—not just a dream, but something

tangible, something already within our grasp! Can't you feel the thrill of it, too—the vision of a new life opening up after all the horrible years?

RUTH—Yes, yes, but do be——

ROBERT—Nonsense! I won't be careful. I'm getting back all my strength. [*He gets lightly to his feet.*] See! I feel light as a feather. [*He walks to her chair and bends down to kiss her smilingly.*] One kiss—the first in years, isn't it?—to greet the dawn of a new life together.

RUTH—[*Submitting to his kiss—worriedly.*] Sit down, Rob, for goodness' sake!

ROBERT—[*With tender obstinacy—stroking her hair*] I won't sit down. You're silly to worry. [*He rests one hand on the back of her chair.*] Listen. All our suffering has been a test through which we had to pass to prove ourselves worthy of a finer realization. [*Exultingly.*] And we did pass through it! It hasn't broken us! And now the dream is to come true! Don't you see?

RUTH—[*Looking at him with frightened eyes as if she thought he had gone mad.*] Yes, Rob, I see; but won't you go back to bed now and rest?

ROBERT—No. I'm going to see the sun rise. It's an augury of good fortune. [*He goes quickly to the window in the rear, left, and pushing the curtains aside, stands looking out.* RUTH *springs to her feet and comes quickly to the table, left, where she remains watching* ROBERT *in a tense, expectant attitude. As he peers out his body seems gradually to sag, to grow*

limp and tired. His voice is mournful as he speaks.] No sun yet. It isn't time. All I can see is the black rim of the damned hills outlined against a creeping greyness. [*He turns around; letting the curtains fall back, stretching a hand out to the wall to support himself. His false strength of a moment has evaporated leaving his face drawn and hollow eyed. He makes a pitiful attempt to smile.*] That's not a very happy augury, is it? But the sun'll come—soon. [*He sways weakly.*]

RUTH—[*Hurrying to his side and supporting him.*] Please go to bed, won't you, Rob? You don't want to be all wore out when the specialist comes, do you?

ROBERT—[*Quickly.*] No. That's right. He mustn't think I'm sicker than I am. And I feel as if I could sleep now—[*Cheerfully.*]—a good, sound, restful sleep.

RUTH—[*Helping him to the bedroom door.*] That's what you need most. [*They go inside. A moment later she reappears calling back.*] I'll shut this door so's you'll be quiet. [*She closes the door and goes quickly to her mother and shakes her by the shoulder.*] Ma! Ma! Wake up!

MRS. ATKINS—[*Coming out of her sleep with a start.*] Glory be! What's the matter with you?

RUTH—It was Rob. He's just been talking to me out here. I put him back to bed. [*Now that she is sure her mother is awake her fear passes and she relapses into dull indifference. She sits down in her chair*

and stares at the stove — dully.] He acted—funny; and his eyes looked so—so wild like.

MRS. ATKINS—[*With asperity.*] And is that all you woke me out of a sound sleep for, and scared me near out of my wits?

RUTH—I was afraid. He talked so crazy—staring out of the window as if he saw—something—and speaking about the hills, and wanting to see the sun rise—and all such notions. I couldn't quiet him. It was like he used to talk—only mad, kind of. I didn't want to be alone with him that way. Lord knows what he might do.

MRS. ATKINS—[*Scornfully.*] Humph! A poor help I'd be to you and me not able to move a step! Why didn't you run and get Jake?

RUTH—[*Dully.*] Jake isn't here. I thought I'd told you. He quit last night. He hasn't been paid in three months. You can't blame him.

MRS. ATKINS—[*Indignantly.*] No, I can't blame him when I come to think of it. What decent person'd want to work on a place like this? [*With sudden exasperation.*] Oh, I wish you'd never married that man!

RUTH—[*Wearily.*] You oughtn't to talk about him now when he's sick in his bed.

MRS. ATKINS—[*Working herself into a fit of rage.*] It's lucky for me and you, too, I took my part of the place out of his hands years ago. You know very well, Ruth Mayo, if it wasn't for me helpin' you on the sly out of my savin's, you'd both

been in the poor house—and all 'count of his pig-headed pride in not lettin' Andy know the state thin's were in. A nice thing for me to have to support him out of what I'd saved for my last days—and me an invalid with no one to look to!

RUTH—Andy'll pay you back, Ma. I can tell him so's Rob'll never know.

MRS. ATKINS—[*With a snort.*] What'd Rob think you and him was livin' on, I'd like to know?

RUTH—[*Dully.*] He didn't think about it, I s'pose [*After a slight pause.*] He said he'd made up his mind to ask Andy for help when he comes. [*As a clock in the kitchen strikes six.*] Six o'clock. Andy ought to get here directly.

MRS. ATKINS—D'you think this special doctor'll do Rob any good?

RUTH—[*Hopelessly.*] I don't know. [*The two women remain silent for a time staring dejectedly at the stove.*]

MRS. ATKINS—[*Shivering irritably.*] For goodness' sake put some wood on that fire. I'm most freezin'!

RUTH—[*Pointing to the door in the rear.*] Don't talk so loud. Let him sleep if he can. [*She gets wearily from the chair and puts a few pieces of wood in the stove. Then she tiptoes to the bedroom door and listens.*]

MRS. ATKINS—[*In a sharp whisper.*] Is he sleepin'?

RUTH—[*Coming back.*] I couldn't hear him move.

I s'pose he is. [*She puts another stick in the stove.*] This is the last of the wood in the pile. I don't know who'll cut more now that Jake's left. [*She sighs and walks to the window in the rear, left, pulls the curtains aside, and looks out.*] It's getting grey out. It'll be light soon and we can put out that lamp. [*She comes back to the stove.*] Looks like it'd be a nice day. [*She stretches out her hands to warm them.*] Must've been a heavy frost last night. We're paying for the spell of warm weather we've been having. [*The throbbing whine of a motor sounds from the distance outside.*]

MRS. ATKINS—[*Sharply.*] S-h-h! Listen! Ain't that an auto I hear?

RUTH—[*Without interest.*] Yes. It's Andy, I s'pose.

MRS. ATKINS—[*With nervous irritation.*] Don't sit there like a silly goose. Look at the state of this room! What'll this strange doctor think of us? Look at that lamp chimney all smoke! Gracious sakes, Ruth——

RUTH—[*Indifferently.*] I've got a lamp all cleaned up in the kitchen.

MRS. ATKINS—[*Peremptorily.*] Wheel me in there this minute. I don't want him to see me looking a sight. I'll lay down in the room the other side. You don't need me now and I'm dead for sleep. I'll have plenty of time to see Andy. [RUTH *wheels her mother off right. The noise of the motor grows louder and finally ceases as the car stops on the road before the*

farmhouse. RUTH *returns from the kitchen with a lighted lamp in her hand which she sets on the table beside the other. The sound of footsteps on the path is heard—then a sharp rap on the door.* RUTH *goes and opens it.* ANDREW *enters, followed by* DOCTOR FAWCETT *carrying a small black bag.* ANDREW *has changed greatly. His face seems to have grown high-strung, hardened by the look of decisiveness which comes from being constantly under a strain where judgments on the spur of the moment are compelled to be accurate. His eyes are keener and more alert. There is even a suggestion of ruthless cunning about them. At present, however, his expression is one of tense anxiety.* DOCTOR FAWCETT *is a short, dark, middle-aged man with a Vandyke beard. He wears glasses.*]

RUTH—Hello, Andy! I've been waiting——

ANDREW—[*Kissing her hastily.*] I know. I got here as soon as I could. [*He throws off his cap and heavy overcoat on the table, introducing* RUTH *and the* DOCTOR *as he does so. He is dressed in an expensive business suit and appears stouter.*] My sister-in-law, Mrs. Mayo—Doctor Fawcett. [*They bow to each other silently.* ANDREW *casts a quick glance about the room.*] Where's Rob?

RUTH—[*Pointing.*] In there.

ANDREW—I'll take your coat and hat, Doctor. [*As he helps the* DOCTOR *with his things.*] Is he very bad, Ruth?

RUTH—[*Dully.*] He's been getting weaker.

ANDREW—Damn! This way, Doctor. Bring the lamp, Ruth. [*He goes into the bedroom, followed by the* DOCTOR *and* RUTH *carrying the clean lamp.* RUTH *reappears almost immediately closing the door behind her, and goes slowly to the outside door, which she opens, and stands in the doorway looking out. The sound of* ANDREW'S *and* ROBERT'S *voices comes from the bedroom. A moment later* ANDREW *re-enters, closing the door softly. He comes forward and sinks down on the rocker on the right of table, leaning his head on his hand. His face is drawn in a shocked expression of great grief. He sighs heavily, staring mornfully in front of him.* RUTH *turns and stands watching him. Then she shuts the door and returns to her chair by the stove, turning it so she can face him.*]

ANDREW—[*Glancing up quickly—in a harsh voice.*] How long has this been going on?

RUTH—You mean—how long has he been sick?

ANDREW—[*Shortly.*] Of course! What else?

RUTH—It was last summer he had a bad spell first, but he's been ailin' ever since Mary died—eight months ago.

ANDREW—[*Harshly.*] Why didn't you let me know—cable me? Do you want him to die, all of you? I'm damned if it doesn't look that way! [*His voice breaking.*] Poor old chap! To be sick in this out-of-the-way hole without anyone to attend to him but a country quack! It's a damned shame!

RUTH—[*Dully.*] I wanted to send you word once,

but he only got mad when I told him. He was too proud to ask anything, he said.

ANDREW—Proud? To ask *me?* [*He jumps to his feet and paces nervously back and forth.*] I can't understand the way you've acted. Didn't you see how sick he was getting? Couldn't you realize—why, I nearly dropped in my tracks when I saw him! He looks—[*He shudders.*]—terrible! [*With fierce scorn.*] I suppose you're so used to the idea of his being delicate that you took his sickness as a matter of course. God, if I'd only known!

RUTH—[*Without emotion.*] A letter takes so long to get where you were—and we couldn't afford to telegraph. We owed everyone already, and I couldn't ask Ma. She'd been giving me money out of her savings for the last two years till she hadn't much left. Don't say anything to Rob about it. I never told him. He'd only be mad at me if he knew. But I had to, because—God knows how we'd have got on if I hadn't.

ANDREW—You mean to say—— [*His eyes seem to take in the poverty-stricken appearance of the room for the first time.*] You sent that telegram to me collect. Was it because—— [RUTH *nods silently.* ANDREW *pounds on the table with his fist.*] Good God! And all this time I've been—why I've had everything! [*He sits down in his chair and pulls it close to* RUTH's —*impulsively.*] But—I can't get it through my head. Why? Why? What has happened? How did it ever come about? Tell me!

RUTH—[*Dully.*] There's nothing much to tell. Things kept getting worse. that's all—and Rob didn't seem to care.

ANDREW—But hasn't he been working the farm?

RUTH—He never took any interest since way back when your Ma died. After that he got men to take charge, and they nearly all cheated him—he couldn't tell—and left one after another. And then there'd be times when there was no one to see to it, when he'd be looking to hire someone new. And the hands wouldn't stay. It was hard to get them. They didn't want to work here, and as soon as they'd get a chance to work some other place they'd leave. Then after Mary died he didn't pay no heed to anything any more—just stayed indoors and took to reading books again. So I had to ask Ma if she wouldn't help us some.

ANDREW—[*Surprised and horrified.*] Why, damn it, this is frightful! Rob must be mad not to have let me know. Too proud to ask help of *me!* It's an insane idea! It's crazy! And for Rob, of all people, to feel that way! What's the matter with him in God's name? He didn't appear to have changed when I was talking to him a second ago. He seemed the same old Rob—only very sick physically. [*A sudden, horrible suspicion entering his mind.*] Ruth! Tell me the truth. His mind hasn't gone back on him, has it?

RUTH—[*Dully.*] I don't know. Mary's dying

broke him up terrible—but he's used to her being gone by this, I s'pose.

ANDREW—[*Looking at her queerly.*] Do you mean to say *you're* used to it?

RUTH—[*In a dead tone.*] There's a time comes—when you don't mind any more—anything.

ANDREW—[*Looks at her fixedly for a moment—with great pity.*] I'm sorry I talked the way I did just now, Ruth—if I seemed to blame you. I didn't realize—— The sight of Rob lying in bed there, so gone to pieces—it made me furious at everyone. Forgive me, Ruth.

RUTH—There's nothing to forgive. It doesn't matter.

ANDREW—[*Springing to his feet again and pacing up and down.*] Thank God I came back before it was too late. This doctor will know exactly what to do to bring him back to health. That's the first thing to think of. When Rob's on his feet again we can get the farm working on a sound basis once more. I'll see to it so that you'll never have any more trouble—before I leave.

RUTH—You're going away again?

ANDREW—Yes. Back to Argentine. I've got to.

RUTH—You wrote Rob you was coming back to stay this time.

ANDREW—I expected to—until I got to New York. Then I learned certain facts that make it necessary. [*With a short laugh.*] To be candid, Ruth, I'm not the rich man you've probably been led to believe by

my letters—not now. I was when I wrote them. I made money hand over fist as long as I stuck to legitimate trading; but I wasn't content with that. I wanted it to come easier, so like all the rest of the idiots, I tried speculation. It was funny, too. I'd always been dead set against that form of gambling before. I guess there's still enough of the farmer in me to make me feel squeemish about Wheat Pits. But I got into it just the same, and it seemed as if I never had a chance to get out. Oh, I won all right! Several times I've been almost a millionaire—on paper—and then come down to earth again with a bump. Finally the strain was too much. I got disgusted with myself and made up my mind to get out and come home and forget it and really live again. I got out—with just a quarter of a million dollars more than I'd had when I landed there five years before. [*He gives a harsh laugh.*] And now comes the funny part. The day before the steamer sailed I saw what I thought was a chance to become a millionaire again. [*He snaps his fingers.*] That easy! I plunged. Then, before things broke, I left—I was so confident I couldn't be wrong—and I left explicit orders to *friends.* [*Bitterly.*] Friends! Well, maybe it wasn't their fault. A fool deserves what he gets. Anyway, when I landed in New York—I wired you I had business to wind up, didn't I? Well, it was the business that wound me up! [*He smiles grimly, pacing up and down, his hands in his pockets.*]

RUTH—[*Dully.*] You found—you'd lost everything?

ANDREW—[*Sitting down again.*] Practically. [*He takes a cigar from his pocket, bites the end off, and lights it.*] Oh, I don't mean I'm dead broke. I've saved ten thousand from the wreckage, maybe twenty. But that's a poor showing for five years' hard work. That's why I'll have to go back. [*Confidently.*] I can make it up in a year or so down there—and I don't need but a shoestring to start with. [*A weary expression comes over his face and he sighs heavily.*] I wish I didn't have to. I'm sick of it all. And I'd made so many plans about converting this place into a real home for all of us, and a working proposition that'd pay big at the same time. [*With another sigh.*] It'll have to wait.

RUTH—It's too bad—things seem to go wrong so.

ANDREW—[*Shaking off his depression—briskly.*] They might be much worse. There's enough left to fix the farm O. K. before I go. I won't leave 'til Rob's on his feet again. In the meantime I'll make things fly around here. [*With satisfaction.*] I need a rest, and the kind of rest I need is hard work in the open—just like I used to do in the old days. I'll organize things on a working basis and get a real man to carry out my plans while I'm away—what I intended to do the last time. [*Stopping abruptly and lowering his voice cautiously.*] Not a word to Rob about my losing money! Remember that, Ruth! You

can see why. If he's grown so touchy he'd never accept a cent if he thought I was hard up; see?

RUTH—Yes, Andy. [*After a pause, during which* ANDREW *puffs at his cigar abstractedly, his mind evidently busy with plans for the future, the bedroom door is opened and* DOCTOR FAWCETT *enters, carrying a bag. He closes the door quietly behind him and comes forward, a grave expression on his face.* ANDREW *springs out of his chair.*]

ANDREW—Ah, Doctor! [*He pushes a chair between his own and* RUTH'S.] Won't you have a chair?

FAWCETT—[*Glancing at his watch.*] I must catch the nine o'clock back to the city. It's imperative. I have only a moment. [*Sitting down and clearing his throat—in a perfunctory, impersonal voice.*] The case of your brother, Mr. Mayo, is—— [*He stops and glances at* RUTH *and says meaningly to* ANDREW.] Perhaps it would be better if you and I——

RUTH—[*With dogged resentment.*] I know what you mean, Doctor; but I'm not going. I'm his wife, and I've got a right to hear what you're going to say. [*Dully.*] Don't be afraid I can't stand it. I'm used to bearing trouble by this; and I can guess what you've found out. Don't you s'pose I could see it staring out of his eyes at me these last days? [*She hesitates for a moment—then continues in a monotonous voice.*] Rob's going to die.

ANDREW—[*Angrily.*] Ruth!

FAWCETT—[*Raising his hand as if to command silence.*] In view of what you have said, Mrs. Mayo,

I see no reason to withhold the facts from you. [*He turns to* ANDREW.] I am afraid my diagnosis of your brother's condition forces me to the same conclusion as Mrs. Mayo's.

ANDREW—[*Groaning.*] But Doctor, surely——

FAWCETT—[*Calmly.*] I am concerned only with facts, my dear sir, and this is one of them. Your brother has not long to live—perhaps a few days, perhaps only a few hours. I would not dare to venture a prediction on that score. It is a marvel that he is alive at this moment. My examination revealed that both of his lungs are terribly affected. A hemorrhage, resulting from any exertion or merely through the unaided progress of the disease itself, will undoubtedly prove fatal.

ANDREW—[*Brokenly.*] Good God! [RUTH *keeps her eyes fixed on her lap in a trance-like stare.*]

FAWCETT—I am sorry I have to tell you this, sorry my trip should prove to be of such little avail. If there was anything that could be done——

ANDREW—There isn't anything?

FAWCETT—[*Shaking his head.*] I am afraid not. It is too late. Six months ago there might have——

ANDREW—[*In anguish.*] But if we were to take him to the mountains—or to Arizona—or——

FAWCETT—That might have prolonged his life six months ago. [ANDREW *groans.*] But now—— [*He shrugs his shoulders significantly.*] I would only be raising a hope in you foredoomed to disappointment if I encouraged any belief that a change of air could

accomplish the impossible. He could not make a journey. The excitement, the effort required, would inevitably bring on the end.

ANDREW—[*Appalled by a sudden thought.*] Good heavens, you haven't told him this, have you, Doctor?

FAWCETT—No. I lied to him. I said a change of climate to the mountains, the desert would bring about a cure. [*Perplexedly.*] He laughed at that. He seemed to find it amusing for some reason or other. I am sure he knew I was lying. A clear foresight seems to come to people as near death as he is. [*He sighs.*] One feels foolish lying to them; and yet one feels one ought to do it, I don't know why. [*He looks at his watch again nervously.*] I must take my leave of you. It is really imperative that I take no risk of missing—— [*He gets up.*]

ANDREW—[*Getting to his feet—insistently.*] But there must still be a chance for him, isn't there, Doctor?

FAWCETT—[*As if he were reassuring a child.*] There is always that last chance—the miracle. We doctors see it happen too often to disbelieve in it. [*He puts on his hat and coat—bowing to* RUTH.] Goodby, Mrs. Mayo.

RUTH—[*Without raising her eyes—dully.*] Goodby.

ANDREW—[*Mechanically.*] I'll walk to the car with you, Doctor. [*They go out the door.* RUTH *sits motionlessly. The motor is heard starting and the noise gradually recedes into the distance.* ANDREW *re-*

enters and sits down in his chair, holding his head in his hands.] Ruth! [*She lifts her eyes to his.*] Hadn't we better go in and see him? God! I'm afraid to! I know he'll read it in my face. [*The bedroom door is noiselessly opened and* ROBERT *appears in the doorway. His cheeks are flushed with fever, and his eyes appear unusually large and brilliant.* ANDREW *continues with a groan.*] It can't be, Ruth. It can't be as hopeless as he said. There's always a fighting chance. We'll take Rob to Arizona. He's *got* to get well. There *must* be a chance!

ROBERT—[*In a gentle tone.*] Why must there, Andy? [RUTH *turns and stares at him with terrified eyes.*]

ANDREW—[*Whirling around.*] Rob! [*Scoldingly.*] What are you doing out of bed? [*He gets up and goes to him.*] Get right back now and obey the Doc, or you're going to get a licking from me!

ROBERT—[*Ignoring these remarks.*] Help me over to the chair, please, Andy.

ANDREW—Like hell I will! You're going right back to bed, that's where you're going, and stay there! [*He takes hold of* ROBERT'S *arm.*]

ROBERT—[*Mockingly.*] Stay there 'til I die, eh, Andy? [*Coldly.*] Don't behave like a child. I'm sick of lying down. I'll be more rested sitting up. [*As* ANDREW *hesitates—violently.*] I swear I'll get out of bed every time you put me there. You'll have to sit on my chest, and that wouldn't help my health any. Come on, Andy. Don't play the fool. I want

to talk to you, and I'm going to. [*With a grim smile.*] A dying man has some rights, hasn't he?

ANDREW—[*With a shudder.*] Don't talk that way, for God's sake! I'll only let you sit down if you'll promise that. Remember. [*He helps* ROB *to the chair between his own and* RUTH'S.] Easy now! There you are! Wait, and I'll get a pillow for you. [*He goes into the bedroom.* ROBERT *looks at* RUTH *who shrinks away from him in terror.* ROBERT *smiles bitterly.* ANDREW *comes back with the pillow which he places behind* ROBERT'S *back.*] How's that?

ROBERT—[*With an affectionate smile.*] Fine! Thank you! [*As* ANDREW *sits down.*] Listen, Andy. You've asked me not to talk—and I won't after I've made my position clear. [*Slowly.*] In the first place I know I'm dying. [RUTH *bows her head and covers her face with her hands. She remains like this all during the scene between the two brothers.*]

ANDREW—Rob! That isn't so!

ROBERT—[*Wearily.*] It *is* so! Don't lie to me. It's useless and it irritates me. After Ruth put me to bed before you came, I saw it clearly for the first time. [*Bitterly.*] I'd been making plans for our future—Ruth's and mine—so it came hard at first—the realization. Then when the doctor examined me, I knew—although he tried to lie about it. And then to make sure I listened at the door to what he told you. So, for my sake, don't mock me with fairy tales about Arizona, or any such rot as that. Because I'm dying is no reason you should treat me as an imbecile or a

coward. Now that I'm sure what's happening I can say Kismet to it with all my heart. It was only the silly uncertainty that hurt. [*There is a pause.* ANDREW *looks around in impotent anguish, not knowing what to say.* ROBERT *regards him with an affectionate smile.*]

ANDREW—[*Finally blurts out.*] It isn't foolish. You *have* got a chance. If you heard all the Doctor said that ought to prove it to you.

ROBERT—Oh, you mean when he spoke of the possibility of a miracle? [*Dryly.*] The Doctor and I disagree on that point. I don't believe in miracles—in my case. Beside I know more than any doctor in earth *could* know—because I *feel* what's coming. [*Dismissing the subject.*] But we've agreed not to talk of it. Tell me about yourself, Andy, and what you've done all these years. That's what I'm interested in. Your letters were too brief and far apart to be illuminating.

ANDREW—I meant to write oftener.

ROBERT—[*With a faint trace of irony.*] I judge from them you've accomplished all you set out to do five years ago?

ANDREW—That isn't much to boast of.

ROBERT—[*Surprised.*] Have you really, honestly reached that conclusion?

ANDREW—Well, it doesn't seem to amount to much now.

ROBERT—But you're rich, aren't you?

ANDREW—[*With a quick glance at* RUTH.] Yes, I s'pose so.

ROBERT—I'm glad. You can do to the farm all I've undone. [*With a smile.*] Do you know I was too proud to ask you for money when things went bad here? You'll have to forgive me for that, Andy.

ANDREW—I knew it wasn't like you to feel that way.

ROBERT—But what did you do down there? Tell me. You went in the grain business with that friend of yours?

ANDREW—Yes. After two years I had a share in it. I sold out last year. [*He is answering* ROB'S *questions with great reluctance.*]

ROBERT—And then?

ANDREW—I went in on my own.

ROBERT—Your own business?

ANDREW—I s'pose you'd call it that.

ROBERT—Still in grain?

ANDREW—Yes.

ROBERT—What's the matter? What's there to be ashamed of? You look as if I was accusing you of crimes.

ANDREW—I'm proud enough of the first four years. It's after that I'm not boasting of. You see, I couldn't make money easy enough that way, so I took to speculating.

ROBERT—In wheat?

ANDREW—Yes.

ROBERT—And you made money—gambling?

ANDREW—Yes.

ROBERT—I can't imagine you as the easy-come, easy-go kind.

ANDREW—I'm not. I'm sick of it.

ROBERT—[*Thoughtfully.*] I've been wondering what the great change was in you. I can see now. It's your eyes. There's an expression about them as if you were constantly waiting to hear a cannon go off, and wincing at the bang beforehand.

ANDREW—[*Grimly.*] I've felt just that way all the past year.

ROBERT—[*After a pause during which his eyes search* ANDREW'S *face.*] Why haven't you ever married?

ANDREW—Never wanted to. Didn't have time to think of it, I guess.

ROBERT—[*After a pause.*] You—a farmer—to gamble in a wheat pit with scraps of paper. There's a spiritual significance in that picture, Andy. [*He smiles bitterly.*] I'm a failure, and Ruth's another—but we can both justly lay some of the blame for our stumbling on God. But you're the deepest-dyed failure of the three, Andy. You've spent eight years running away from yourself. Do you see what I mean? You used to be a creator when you loved the farm. You and life were in harmonious partnership. And now—— [*He stops as if seeking vainly for words.*] My brain is muddled. But part of what I mean is that your gambling with the thing you used to love to create proves how far astray you've gotten

from the truth. So you'll be punished. You'll have to suffer to win back—— [*His voice grows weaker and he sighs wearily.*] It's no use. I can't say it. [*He lies back and closes his eyes, breathing pantingly.*]

ANDREW—[*Slowly.*] I think I know what you're driving at, Rob—and it's true, I guess. [ROBERT *smiles gratefully and stretches out his hand, which* ANDREW *takes in his.*]

ROBERT—I want you to promise me to do one thing, Andy, after—

ANDREW—I'll promise anything, as God is my Judge!

ROBERT—Remember, Andy, Ruth has suffered double her share, and you haven't suffered at all. [*His voice faltering with weakness.*] Only through contact with suffering, Andy, will you—awaken. Listen. You must marry Ruth—afterwards.

RUTH—[*With a cry.*] Rob! [ROBERT *lies back, his eyes closed, gasping heavily for breath.*]

ANDREW—[*Making signs to her to humor him—gently.*] You're tired out, Rob. You shouldn't have talked so much. You better lie down and rest a while, don't you think? We can talk later on.

ROBERT—[*With a mocking smile.*] Later on! You always were an optimist, Andy! [*He sighs with exhaustion.*] Yes, I'll go and rest a while. [*As* ANDREW *comes to help him.*] It must be near sunrise, isn't it? It's getting grey out.

ANDREW—Yes—pretty near. It's after six.

ROBERT—[*As* ANDREW *helps him to the bedroom.*] Pull the bed around so it'll face the window, will you, Andy? I can't sleep, but I'll rest and forget if I can watch the rim of the hills and dream of what is waiting beyond. [*They go into the bedroom.*] And shut the door, Andy. I want to be alone. [ANDREW *reappears and shuts the door softly. He comes and sits down on his chair again, supporting his head on his hands. His face is drawn with the intensity of his dry-eyed anguish.*]

RUTH—[*Glancing at him—fearfully.*] He's out of his mind now, isn't he?

ANDREW—He may be a little delirious. The fever would do that. [*With impotent rage.*] God, what a shame! And there's nothing we can do but sit and—wait! [*He springs from his chair and walks to the stove.*]

RUTH—[*Dully.*] He was talking—wild—like he used to—only this time it sounded—unnatural, don't you think?

ANDREW—I don't know. The things he said to me had truth in them—even if he did talk them way up in the air, like he always sees things. Still—— [*He glances down at* RUTH *keenly.*] Why do you suppose he wanted us to promise we'd—— [*Confusedly.*] You know what he said.

RUTH—[*Dully.*] His mind was wandering, I s'pose.

ANDREW—[*With conviction.*] No— there was something back of it.

RUTH—He wanted to make sure I'd be all right—after he'd gone, I expect.

ANDREW—No, it wasn't that. He knows very well I'd naturally look after you without—anything like that.

RUTH—He might be thinking of—something happened five years back, the time you came home from the trip.

ANDREW—What happened? What do you mean?

RUTH—[*Dully.*] It was the day you came. We had a fight.

ANDREW—A fight? What has that to do with me?

RUTH—It was about you—in a way.

ANDREW—[*Amazed.*] About *me?*

RUTH—Yes, mostly. You see I'd found out I'd made a mistake about Rob soon after we were married—when it was too late.

ANDREW—Mistake? [*Slowly.*] You mean—you found out you didn't love Rob?

RUTH—Yes.

ANDREW—Good God!

RUTH—And then I thought that when Mary came it'd be different, and I'd love him; but it didn't happen that way. And I couldn't bear with his blundering and book-reading—and I grew to hate him, almost.

ANDREW—Ruth!

RUTH—I couldn't help it. No woman could. It had to be because I loved someone else, I'd found out. [*She sighs wearily.*] It can't do no harm to tell you

now—when it's all past and gone—and dead. *You* were the one I really loved—only I didn't come to the knowledge of it 'til too late.

ANDREW—[*Stunned.*] Ruth! Do you know what you're saying?

RUTH—It was true—then. [*With sudden fierceness.*] How could I help it? No woman could.

ANDREW—Then—you loved me—that time I came home?

RUTH—Yes.

ANDREW—But—couldn't you see—I didn't love you—that way?

RUTH—[*Doggedly.*] Yes—I saw then; but I'd known your real reason for leaving home the first time—everybody knew it—and for three years I'd been thinking——

ANDREW—That I loved you?

RUTH—Yes. Then that day on the hill you laughed about what a fool you'd been for loving me once—and I knew it was all over.

ANDREW—Good God, but I never thought—— [*He stops, shuddering at his remembrance.*] And did Rob——

RUTH—That was what I'd started to tell. We'd had a fight just before you came and I got crazy mad—and I told him all I've told you.

ANDREW—[*Gaping at her speechlessly for a moment.*] You told Rob—you loved me?

RUTH—Yes.

ANDREW—[*Shrinking away from her in horror.*]

You—you—you mad fool, you! How could you do such a thing?

RUTH—I couldn't help it. I'd got to the end of bearing things—without talking.

ANDREW—And the thought of the child—his child and yours—couldn't keep your mouth shut?

RUTH—I was crazy mad at him—when I told.

ANDREW—Then Rob must have known every moment I stayed here! And yet he never said or showed—God, how he must have suffered! Didn't you know how much he loved you?

RUTH—[*Dully.*] Yes. I knew he liked me.

ANDREW—Liked you! How can you talk in that cold tone—now—when he's dying! What kind of a woman are you? I'd never believe it was in you to be so—— Couldn't you have kept silent—no matter what you felt or thought? Did you have to torture him? No wonder he's dying. I don't see how he's lived through it as long as he has. I couldn't. No. I'd have killed myself—or killed you.

RUTH—[*Dully.*] I wish he had—killed me.

ANDREW—And you've lived together for five years with this horrible secret between you?

RUTH—We've lived in the same house—not as man and wife.

ANDREW—But what does he feel about it now? Tell me! Does he still think——

RUTH—I don't know. We've never spoke a word about it since that day. Maybe, from the way he

went on, he s'poses I care for you yet. Maybe that's one reason he said what he did.

ANDREW—But you don't. You can't. It's outrageous. It's stupid! You don't love me!

RUTH—[*Slowly.*] I wouldn't know how to feel love, even if I tried, any more.

ANDREW—[*Brutally.*] And I don't love you, that's sure! [*He sinks into his chair, his head between his hands.*] It's damnable such a thing should be between Rob and me—we that have been pals ever since we were born, almost. Why, I love Rob better'n anybody in the world and always did. There isn't a thing on God's green earth I wouldn't have done to keep trouble away from him. And now I have to be the very one—it's damnable! How am I going to face him again? What can I say to him now? [*He groans with anguished rage. After a pause.*] He asked me to promise—what am I going to do?

RUTH—You can promise—so's it'll ease his mind —and not mean anything.

ANDREW—What? Lie to him now—when he's dying? Can you believe I'd descend as low as that? And there's no sense in my lying. He knows I don't love you. [*Determinedly.*] No! It's *you* who'll have to do the lying, since it must be done. You're the cause of all this. You've got to! You've got a chance now to undo some of all the suffering you've brought on Rob. Go in to him! Tell him you never loved me—it was all a mistake. Tell him you only said so because you were mad and didn't know what

you were saying, and you've been ashamed to own up to the truth before this. Tell him something, anything, that'll bring him peace and make him believe you've loved him all the time.

RUTH—[*Dully.*] It's no good. He wouldn't believe me.

ANDREW—[*Furiously.*] You've got to make him believe you, do you hear? You've got to—now—hurry—you never know when it may be too late. [*As she hesitates—imploringly.*] For God's sake, Ruth! Don't you see you owe it to him? You'll never forgive yourself if you don't.

RUTH—[*Dully.*] I'll go. [*She gets wearily to her feet and walks slowly toward the bedroom.*] But it won't do any good. [ANDREW's *eyes are fixed on her anxiously. She opens the door and steps inside the room. She remains standing there for a minute. The she calls in a frightened voice.*] Rob! Where are you? [*Then she hurries back, trembling with fright.*] Andy! Andy! He's gone!

ANDREW—[*Misunderstanding her—his face pale with dread.*] He's not——

RUTH—[*Interrupting him—hysterically.*] He's gone! He isn't in there. The bed's empty. The window's wide open. He must have crawled out into the yard!

ANDREW—[*Springing to his feet. He rushes into the bedroom and returns immediately with an expression of alarmed amazement on his face.*] Come! He

can't have gone far! We've got to find him! [*Grabbing his hat he takes* RUTH's *arm and shoves her toward the door.*] Come on! [*Opening the door.*] Let's hope to God—— [*The door closes behind them, cutting off his words as*

[*The Curtain Falls*]

ACT THREE

SCENE TWO

SCENE—*Same as Act One, Scene One—A section of country highway. The sky to the east is already alight with bright color and a thin, quivering line of flame is spreading slowly along the horizon rim of the dark hills. The roadside, however, is still steeped in the greyness of the dawn, shadowy and vague. The field in the foreground has a wild uncultivated appearance as if it had been allowed to remain fallow the preceeding summer. Parts of the snake-fence in the rear have been broken down. The apple tree is leafless and seems dead.*

ROBERT *staggers weakly in from the left. He stumbles into the ditch and lies there for a moment; then crawls with a great effort to the top of the bank where he can see the sun rise, and collapses weakly.* RUTH *and* ANDREW *come hurriedly along the road from the left.*

ANDREW—[*Stopping and looking about him.*] There he is! I knew it! I knew we'd find him here.

ROBERT—[*Trying to raise himself to a sitting*

position as they hasten to his side—with a wan smile.] I thought I'd given you the slip.

ANDREW—[*With kindly bullying.*] Well you didn't, you old scoundrel, and we're going to take you right back where you belong—in bed. [*He makes a motion to lift* ROBERT.] What d'you mean by running away like this, eh?

ROBERT—Don't, Andy. Don't, I tell you! I can't bear it!

ANDREW—You're in pain?

ROBERT—[*Simply.*] No. I'm dying. [*He falls back weakly.* RUTH *sinks down beside him with a sob and pillows his head on her lap.*] Don't try to move me, Andy. It would mean——. I had a bad hemorrhage—trying to get here. I knew then— it was only—a few minutes more. [ANDREW *stands looking down at him helplessly.* ROBERT *moves his head restlessly on* RUTH'S *lap.*] There! Just so I can see—the sun. I couldn't stand it back there in the room. It seemed as if all my life—I'd been cooped in a room. So I thought I'd try to end as I might have—if I'd had the courage to live my dream. Alone—in a ditch by the open road—watching the sun rise.

ANDREW—Rob! Don't talk. You're wasting your strength. Rest a while and then we'll carry you——

ROBERT—Still hoping, Andy? Don't. I know. [*There is a pause during which he breathes heavily, straining his eyes toward the horizon.*] The sun comes so slowly. I haven't long—to wait. [*With an ironical smile.*] The doctor told me to go to the far-off places

—and I'd be cured. He was right. That was always the cure for me. It's too late—for this world—but in the next I'll not miss—the secret. [*He has a fit of coughing which racks his body.*]

ANDREW—[*With a hoarse sob.*] Rob! [*He clenches his fists in an impotent rage against fate.*] God! God! [RUTH *sobs brokenly and wipes* ROBERT'S *lips with her handkerchief.*]

ROBERT—[*In a voice which is suddenly ringing with the happiness of hope.*] You mustn't feel sorry for me. It's ridiculous! Don't you see I'm happy at last—because I'm making a start to the far-off places—free—free!—freed from the farm—free to wander on and on—eternally! Even the hills are powerless to shut me in now. [*He raises himself on his elbow, his face radiant, and points to the horizon.*] Look! Isn't it beautiful beyond the hills? I can hear the old voices calling me to come—— [*Exultantly.*] And this time I'm going—I'm free! It isn't the end. It's a free beginning—the start of my voyage! Don't you see? I've won to my trip—the right of release—beyond the horizon! Oh, you ought to be glad—glad—for my sake! [*He collapses weakly.*] Andy! [ANDREW *bends down to him.*] Remember RUTH——

ANDREW—I'll take care of her, I swear to you, Rob!

ROBERT—Ruth has suffered—and for your own sake and hers—remember, Andy—only through sacrifice—the secret beyond there—— [*He suddenly raises himself with his last remaining strength and*

points to the horizon where the edge of the sun's disc is rising from the rim of the hills.] The sun! [*He remains with his eyes fixed on it for a moment. A rattling noise throbs from his throat. He mumbles:*] Remember! [*And falls back and is still.* RUTH *gives a cry of horror and springs to her feet, shuddering, her hands over her eyes.* ANDREW *bends on one knee beside the body, placing a hand over* ROBERT'S *heart, then he kisses his brother reverentially on the forehead and stands up.*]

ANDREW—[*Facing* RUTH, *the body between them—in a dead voice.*] He's dead. [*With a sudden burst of fury.*] God damn you, you never told him!

RUTH—[*Piteously.*] He was so happy without my lying to him.

ANDREW—[*Pointing to the body—trembling with the violence of his rage.*] This is your doing, you damn woman, you coward, you murderess! He's dead because you've killed him, do you hear?

RUTH—[*Sobbing.*] Don't, Andy! Stop! I couldn't help it—and he knew how I'd suffered, too. He told you—to remember.

ANDREW—[*Stares at her for a moment, his rage ebbing away, an expression of deep pity gradually coming over his face. Then he glances down at his brother and speaks brokenly in a compassionate voice.*] Forgive me, Ruth—for his sake. I know he was right—and I'll remember what he said [RUTH *lets her hands fall from her face and looks at him uncomprehendingly. He lifts his eyes to hers and*

forces out falteringly:] I—you—we've both made such a mess of things! We must try to help each other—and—in time—we'll come to know what's right to do—— [*Desperately.*] And perhaps we—— [*But* RUTH, *if she is aware of his words, gives no sign. She remains silent, gazing at him dully with the sad humility of exhaustion, her mind already sinking back into that spent calm beyond the further troubling of any hope.*]

[*The Curtain Falls*]

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